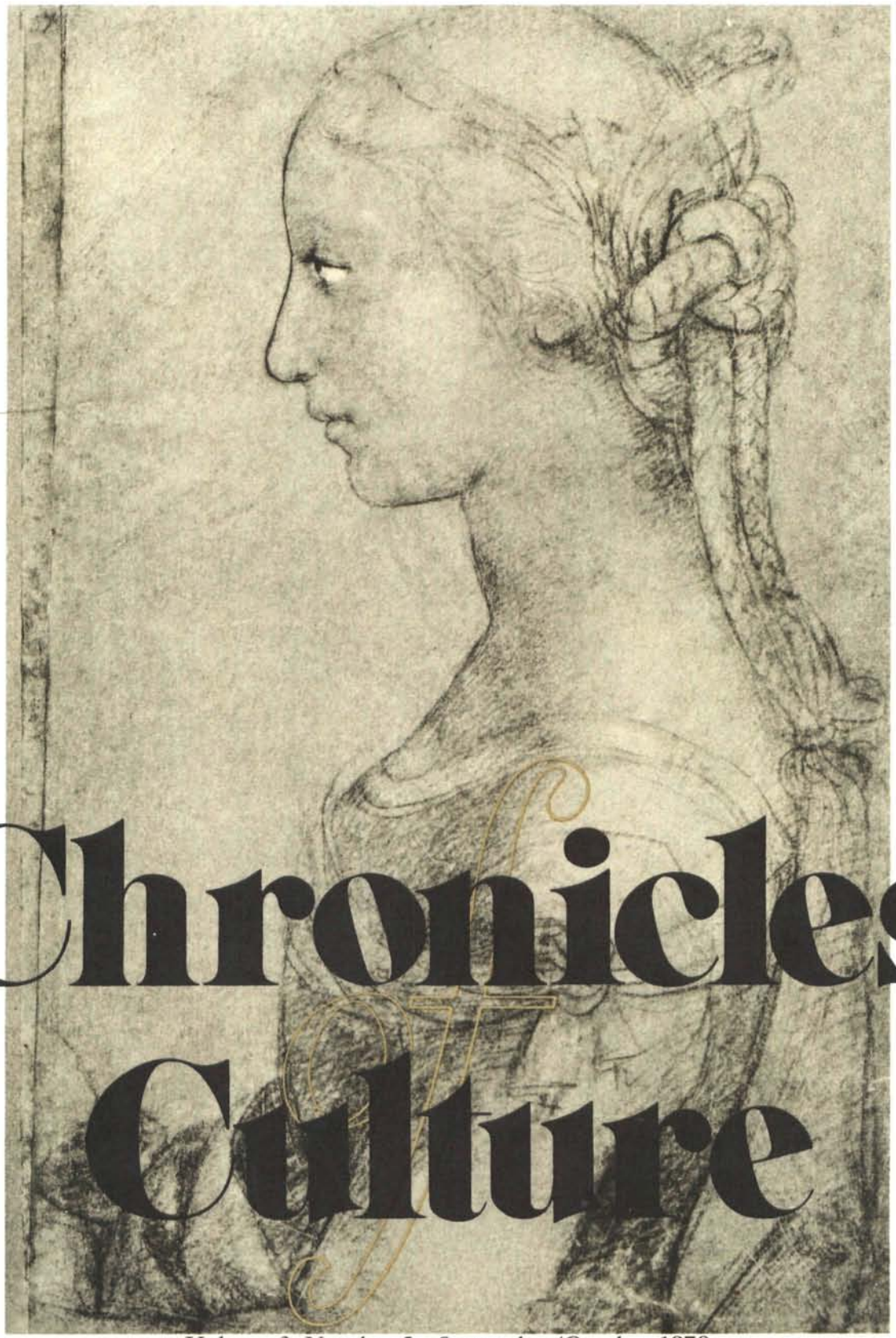
Normalcy–Our Sixth Sense



Chronicles of Culture

Volume 3, Number 5 September/October 1979

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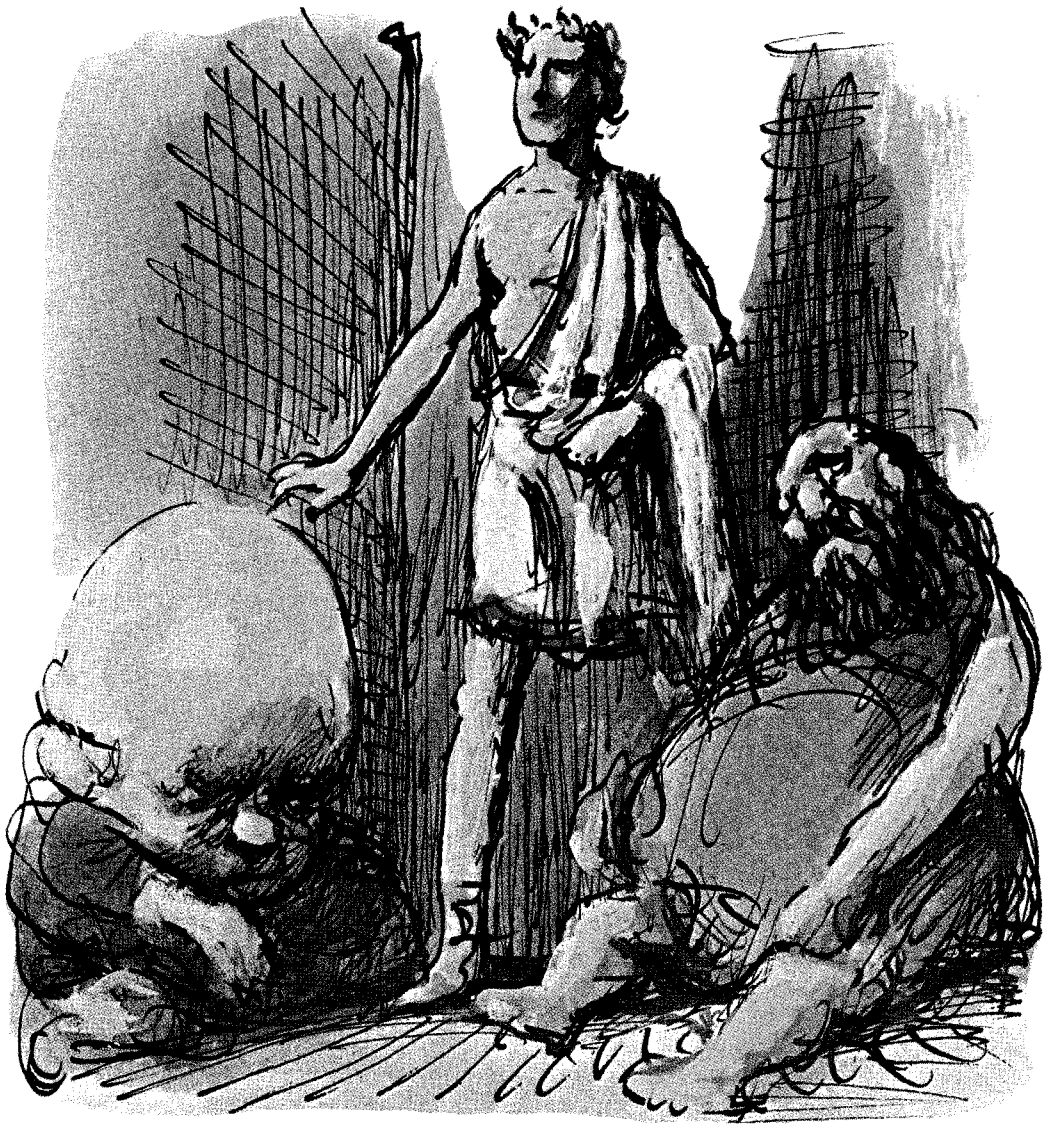

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Editor's Comment

What's normalcy?

No one knows exactly. People with an innate propensity for moody incertitude would argue that, to begin with, it does not exist. Both scientists and sophist philosophers are uneasy with it: it is somehow counter to the on-the-other-hand recipe for knowledge. On the other hand, however, without the notion of normalcy, both science and casuistry would turn into sports of irrationality turned loose, which they can hardly afford. Thus, a biologist might argue that normalcy is 68° Fahrenheit, that is a temperature in which many organisms best grow and prosper. It's a cogent definition, though useless outside of a laboratory. Nature is known for never having produced two identical limbs, minds or rocks. So how can we speak of one standard applicable to love, democracy, sophistication, compassion or sense of humor?

As normalcy was not provided by nature, we had to do something about it. We discovered early that the lack of normality in the universal scheme was a defect, and we had to correct it. We felt its need. So, we invented it. We thought it up; it was necessary for us to have a measure of viable order, indispensable for living in a community, in a society, or just peaceably one next to another. Thus, its possible absence at the moment of creation is not proof of its non-existence. It exists now just as the internal combustion engine, aspirin, differential calculus and the State Department.

So—what's normalcy?

It is a standard, or a set of standards, applicable and acceptable to most, to the largest amount of people. A rather primitive exemplification: most people react adversely to noxious smells. But both medicine and literature teach us that there are some people who cull an unexpected bliss from sniffing odors the majority of mankind abhors. We call the first response normal and the second unusual, extraordinary, or interesting, if we are either very hip or very polite. We may call it abnormal.

For centuries, normalcy—as a notion, a word and a practical frame of reference for arts and sciences—generated little excitement, or even interest. It was a concept which we could deduct from data offered to us by reasoning, empiricism, observation. Sages might have nursed some suspicions about its precise meaning, but they did not consider it urgent to probe and dissect it. Not long ago, however, the post-Einsteinian natural sciences fractured the very notion of normalcy without abrogating its necessity. With the arrival of institutionalized psychology and psychoanalysis, normalcy fell into disgrace.

For a hundred-odd years, the doctors of psyche have been waging a merciless and murderous war of extinction against normalcy. They call it the worst names and swear not to rest until it is totally eradicated from our minds, feelings and bodies; our primary need to relate to something more stable and solid than dreams, drives and dreads seems unwholesome to the psychoanalysts. The animus against normalcy on the part of those learned in dealing with murky impulses may be grounded in their faithfulness to science's honor, to the results of their research, and in speculations which make them conclude that normalcy is a false, or at least spurious, presumption. But many wonder whether it is the purity of scientific freedom that is at stake. Many of us see normalcy not only as something complex and enigmatic, but also as something both utilitarian and idealistic, pragmatic and visionary in the same breath—in a word: something much too weighty to be left to psychologists to decide. "I am positive I have a soul; nor can all the books with which materialists have pestered the world ever convince me to the contrary—" Laurence Sterne wrote when spiritual equipment was rabidly denied to humans by the militants of the 18th-century antisoul movement. Billions of people on this planet are equally positive that normalcy exists—and, moreover, that it is indispensable for a sense of eventual survival in the world of today, where the norms of human values and cogent human endeavors are gleefully shattered by the social elites gone nihilist and by the liberal media which support them. People have a burning desire to preserve the virtue of blushing when obscenities are spread around, and to expect an "Excuse me—" when bumping into each other. They yearn to call this state of things normalcy, while calling the disposition or conduct of those who tend to do away with blushing and civility abnormal.

Thus, during all those millennia when we lived with normalcy as a welcome and admired partner, it became more than a word, a notion, a point of reference. It has now become our sixth sense. As we know them, human senses are distinguished by the circumstance that most people have them in common—though not all of the people; much as we wish that everybody could see, there are the sightless among us. We may be aware that it's immensely hard to define the sense of normalcy, but it is possible. It is a sense which is close to taste and touch, with a wide range of differentiated preferences. We all know that at a certain point, the amount of hotness in a dish can reach a degree at which even the most enthusiastic afficionado of spiced food will find personal offense. Not long ago, America's newspapers obtrusively peddled the story of a youthful homosexual who decided to take a homosexual date to his high school prom. The adolescent deviate was not off the mark as far as his correct gauging of the sociocultural climate of his age is concerned: we live in times of the hypertrophy of a peculiar mood of tolerance, when every excess or abuse of the sense of normalcy is tolerated, while a free opinion about those abuses is not. He can hardly be called a nonconformist, as

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his was an act of compliance with the reigning behavioral dogma, a collaboration with power, not a challenge of power, as the homosexuals are simply an officially sanctioned social minority these days, thanks to the decree of liberal culture and fashion. Thus, the young inverts gained entrance to the festivities in keeping with the new social mood, but, according to press reports, people started to leave when they appeared. No one was hostile or repressive, but their manifested union offended something in everybody. Everybody's sense of normalcy was hurt.

That's obvious to anyone with unatrophied common sense. It is far from obvious to homosexuals and all those who see a civil rights cause in sexual deviation. At the very core of the contemporary homosexual crusade is a claim to normalcy. The rest of mankind, or one should say the overwhelming majority of mankind, cannot and will never accept this as either justified or true. Normalcy in the realm of sexuality is the duality of genders, which conditions procreation, which guarantees the continuity of life. Anything that contradicts this fundamental scheme cannot *also* be normal, lest words lose their meaning and interhuman communication cease. A physical digression from the standard is ailment or sickness, which we regard as a temporary absence of the normal functions of the body. However, nothing seems more unacceptable to a homosexual than calling his disposition a sickness: he does not consider himself infirm in any way, and perhaps with good reason. Thus, we have a lingering conflict, whose essence is the sense of normalcy and its vicissitudes, in an era when understanding, compassion and even indulgence no longer assuage human grievances; normalcy must be abused and trampled in order to redress injustices or errors of the past. And this abuse gravely distorts our ability to build a society and create social moods where comity, humanness and genuine tolerance can flourish and benefit us all.

Whatever the bickering of modern psychoshamans who never will acquiesce to normality as a verifiable phenomenon, most people would repeat Laurence Sterne's words deep down in their soul, chiefly because normalcy is no longer a notion from the realm of psychology, anthropology, physics or medicine. In our time, it has become a moral concept—today it determines both our distinction between right and wrong, and our ethical choices. Only with such a perspective can we correctly perceive feminism not as an idea, but as an affirmative action on behalf of those who are wronged either by nature or society; as such it has all the irrational features of affirmative actions that are movements of the heart rather than the mind, whatever their source or destination. When Freud first suggested that normalcy and sanity were relative impressions of the human mind, many were apprehensive about whether—assuming that his findings were true—a society, let alone a civilization, could be structured on such a discovery. But Freud was still a man of intellectual tact: those who read him properly soon conclude that authentic Freudism is only a system of suspicions. His epigones began to relentlessly press down the pedal, and now, thanks to the social results of their efforts, many see clearly that normalcy and sanity are moral preconditions for our very survival. Deviations and aberrations can be commiserated and alleviated, but accepting them as a coeval principle of a social order spells suicide. However, our premonitions and our will to cope with the misguided legacy of Freud have been rendered moot by the unexpected twist of cultural moods. Hysterias and neuroses have fled the boundaries of scientific studies and have invaded the rolling landscapes of literature and literary fads; they have quickly turned into shallow poses and fashions among the elites and, smoothly blended with phony egalitarianism, have begun to infect the masses. By the second part of the century, the reigning cultural modes had alacritously agreed to draw an equal sign between normalcy and abnormalcy: whoever simply declared himself and his proposals normal and sane easily acquired the stamp of normalcy and sanity from the liberal culture, regardless of any criteria of reason, objectivity, logic or experience. Acts and events followed profusely, and suddenly we found ourselves in a reality whose spokespersons held it utterly unbecoming to maintain that both Charles Manson and Gore Vidal thrive on insanity. To express a view that the Woodstock subculture bred abnormalcy was the ultimate in bad manners, let alone taste. Any demand that a commonly obligatory principle of human existence be upheld was called repression in psychology and oppression in national affairs. Sexual chaos, erratic bestiality of man toward man, the dissipation of the social fabric and a dismal cheapening of the quality of life duly ensued.

One of the major wishes of human mind and heart is for a coherence of wishes and attainments. As every ideal, this coherence is hard to reach: we are by nature neither white nor black but a sort of composite grayish. However, an overtly proclaimed renunciation of striving toward coherence, and replacing it with the disjointedness of personal exertions and endeavors, is an invitation to abnormality, and gives it special powers to regulate existence. It is soon transformed into a lethal threat to the assorted stabilities and securities that form the basis for an organized society. Certainly, some would say: "So what?" but most will respond: "Wait and see . . ." The subculture of the mid-'60s injected huge masses with an aberrant conviction that youth was the center of one's life span and no one should bother about what might happen later. It resulted in a generation unable to project itself as becoming older in its preferences and propensities. Just one adolescent who was so limited could easily be disregarded as a juvenile idiot, but a mass of people

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The Importance of Being a Terrorist *en Vogue*

Otto J. Scott: ***The Secret Six: John Brown and the Abolitionist Movement;*** **Times Books/Quadrangle; New York.**

by Gordon M. Pradl

Late Spring, planting right on schedule, the anticipation of a new cycle of growth just beginning. After an endless day in the field, James and Mahala Doyle and their daughter and three sons had retired shortly after the evening meal. Now they slept peacefully in the comfort of their beds. The hot, humid night air lapped at the security and tranquility of their home. It was ten o'clock.

Suddenly, a band of eight men invaded the Doyle household. James Doyle and his two eldest sons were dragged outside and murdered: the father shot in the forehead, one son "stabbed in the face, slashed over the head, and shot in the side," and the other hacked at until "his fingers and then his arms were cut off" and then stabbed in the chest. But the murderers were not sated. At the next farm they roused a Mr. Wilkinson and "outside in the dark they cut [his] throat, stabbed him in the side and over the head." Finally, a last farm was raided where Dutch Bill was murdered with sabers beside Pottawatomie Creek. "One blow severed his left hand, except for a strand of flesh, as he raised it in self-defense. His skull was opened in two places; and he fell headlong into the shallows. After his murderers washed their sabers and walked away, the chilly waters of the river gradually carried away part of his brain." For the survivors the quiet of the night air would never return.

Thus opens Otto Scott's remarkable history of *The Secret Six.* As readers we are immediately confronted with the graphic details of the five murders committed by John Brown and his gang on May 24, 1856, and the stark reality of this terrible image will not leave our mind's eye. We are off on a narrative journey that will eventually end with the events surrounding the Harper's Ferry Raid, but any illusions we might previously have had regarding Brown's heroic mission against slavery are banished forever when, in the first chapter, we are forced to deal with events as they really happened on that bloody night in Kansas, almost 125 years ago.

Scott completes the perspective of his narrative by placing a second and equally damning image before the reader. In Chapter Two, we witness a scene of violence that occurred in Boston two years prior to Brown's nighttime massacre. Anthony Burns, a slave from Virginia, was being tried under the Fugitive Slave Law, and three of the Secret Six (Parker, Howe, and Higginson) were trying to agitate a crowd to confront the authorities for his release. In the ensuing struggle one of the guards was killed. Reverend Higginson's self-serving assessment of this event shows us the fanatical, bloodthirsty aspects of the holy crusade of the abolitionists: "There had been other fugitive slave rescues in different parts of the country, but this was the first drop of blood actually shed." Scott, however, juxtaposes this tale of the armchair radicals with the conclusion to Burns' story: "A month later Burns, by then returned to Virginia, had his freedom purchased by some modest and quiet citizens, who paid to send him to Oberlin College. In due course he would emerge a Baptist minister." In such righteous movements men lose their basic humanity because they are not really interested in the subject itself (Burns in this instance), but rather in the symbolic and political usefulness of the subject. Thus all manner of irrationality is justified by the morality of the idealized abstraction.

After establishing these repulsive portraits of Bloody John Brown and the Massachusetts abolitionists, Scott goes back in time to chronologically paint the entire panorama of the growing conflict between the North and the South over the slavery question. The Secret Six formed a loose association of respectable New Englanders whose anti-slavery feelings ended by blinding them to the realities of violence, but in part this myopia was the result of their ability to distance themselves from the violence by retreating to the safety of the social circles in which they moved. The six included: Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, husband of Julia Ward Howe and famous worldwide for his work with the blind, the deaf and the mute at the Perkins Institute; the Reverend Theodore Parker, a leading transcendentalist intellectual who loved books (more than 12,000 lined the walls of his study) and bears (his admirers sent him dozens of bear figurines, statuettes and drawings); Gerrit Smith, a New York millionaire who supported a variety of eccentric philanthropic schemes and initially was a noted pacifist, serving as a vice president of the American Peace Society; George Luther Stearns, a wealthy lead-pipe manufacturer with the instincts of a gambler who was almost wiped out trying to corner the lead market, but was subsequently rescued by Boston friends; the Reverend Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a prolific writer, but also a restless man of action (he would later lead a regiment

"A popular audience might find the book interesting; scholars will prefer . . ."
—*Library Journal*

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of Negro troops during the Civil War) whose invalid wife from time to time forced him into foreign travel, away from the battles that were heating up at home; and Frank Sanborn, the youngest of the group, only 27 in 1859, who, at Emerson's urgings, had opened a school in Concord after his graduation from Harvard.

Interspersed with the activities of the Secret Six, Scott gives us repeated glimpses of the strange career of John Brown, from tanner and farmer, to wool merchant and revolutionary recruiter. Brown actually possessed considerable talents; but always the vain and paranoid autocratic stance, the iron fist of authority over family and associates, the utter intolerance of opposing views, spelled the righteous monomania of the fanatic. Thus an unusual portrait of contrasts emerges: on the one hand, Brown lionized in Boston by the abolitionists, on the other, an outlaw always one step ahead of his creditors, yet still in search of more funds for his causes, both public and private. This trail leads inevitably to the tragic slaughter at Harper's Ferry in 1859 and the resulting trial and hanging of John Brown; but the upstanding co-conspirators remained free, shivering in their boots as they disowned all connection with Brown once the deeds they had encouraged had in fact been carried out. Among the final images of the drama are Howe fleeing to Canada and Smith and Sanborn rushing to burn all their private papers that bound them to the conspiracy. As Scott ironically comments: ". . . it was only much later—after the danger had passed and only the glory remained—that [Sanborn] said he had destroyed all the evidence lest it 'compromise other persons.'"

* * *

Scott relishes his role as storyteller, building up his point of view with a highly developed sense of style firmly rooted in the irony of juxtaposition, such as we see in his description of John Brown voting in the 1855 Free State election:

> "Apparently no questions were asked about the newcomer's right to vote: the Northern settlers were as careless of legalities as the Southerners and both factions seemed unaware that they were making a mockery out of rights their forebears had died to obtain."

Although Scott generally allows events and details to speak for themselves, placed ever so carefully in the emerging argument of his narrative, his occasional analytical insights penetrate to the heart of the matter. His summary of the religious confusion surrounding the self-righteous rhetoric of the period is a case in point.

> "There was no question of the piety of millions. There was equally little doubt that they did not fully realize that a land with no religious center is a land where religion is what anyone chooses to claim . . . What the abolitionists did not realize was that the government of the United States had no official moral standard and was, therefore, fragile. They did not realize that Britain had weathered centuries of such crises and had developed a complex, subtle network of accommodations between the ideals of the people and the limits of their imperfections. They did not even realize that Christianity itself was not based on the eradication of sin, but on individual struggle against its myriad and eternal forms, including excessive pride in virtue. They completely overlooked, if they knew, that Christianity 'did not demand that men remove others from sin, but themselves.'"

Thus proceeds the precision of Scott's interpretation alongside the complexities of the tale's interlocking actors and scenes.

Scott clearly intended to create a history that instructs us in our societal behavior. Senseless, unprovoked violence has been all too common an occurrence throughout man's history, yet what is frightening in this instance is that the conventional wisdom, in canonizing John Brown and his abolitionist supporters, has tended to legitimize irrational force and intimidation, as opposed to persuasion and direct confrontation, as a means to bring about social change. This shift, Scott demonstrates, was "the result of efforts by persons from privileged backgrounds, of outstanding abilities, famous for their eloquence and elevated by great success, who built an intellectual movement in which this new type of assassin was a welcome figure . . . . All of them were dissatisfied with the normal process of government, and all were obsessed with the desire to make their opinions—and not the decisions of the elected leaders of the people—the determining factors in the life of the nation." Suddenly anyone with a grievance had the "right" to impose his viewpoint on others, regardless of the means employed. And as Scott fears, this behavior meshes all too well with deeper patterns of American life: a general impatience which mitigates against the building of popular consensus, the heightened egocentrism of rugged individualism where the outlaw is still romanticized, the stance of moral superiority so frequently assumed in political debate.

* * *

Consider these modern day references to John Brown and the Kansas affair contained in typical high school social studies textbooks: "Because he was willing to defy any authority in his war on slavery, he has been called mad"—though the reader is meant to infer otherwise! Or "In 1856, he had led a raid on a pro-slavery encampment at Pottawatomie Creek in Kansas in which five men had been killed." Significantly the five men are killed (not murdered) in the passive voice, not the active voice—just something that happened beyond Brown's control since

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he was fighting for a just cause! The actual facts as Scott has revealed them are glossed over in these textbooks, and the problem of terrorism avoided. The reality of innocent murder is never pleasant, and so naturally enough the historian would prefer to rationalize it away, especially when a banner as glorious as that accorded the abolitionists is conveniently at hand. Yet contrast this legacy of honor generally attached to Brown's name with Lincoln's assessment of the Harper's Ferry Raid:

> "John Brown's effort was peculiar. It was not a slave insurrection. It was an attempt by white men to get up a revolt among slaves, in which the slaves refused to participate. In fact, it was so absurd that the slaves, with all their ignorance, saw plainly enough it could not succeed. That affair, in its philosophy, corresponds with the many attempts, related in history, at the assassination of kings and emperors. An enthusiast broods over the oppression of a people till he fancies himself commissioned by heaven to liberate them. He ventures the attempt, which ends in little else than his own execution."

Lincoln's judgment, significantly, remains buried mainly because the facts of history, as Scott argues, are finally at the mercy of the word manipulators. Alchemy *is* possible in the media. If power in high places is to be served, terrorists can indeed be palmed off as martyrs. Thus, perhaps Scott's most valuable contribution in writing *The Secret Six* is exposing the powerful influence of journalistic propaganda in creating a public opinion that inevitably rigidified the sides in the national debate and pushed the country into a civil war —a war that brought many changes, but hardly reaffirmed the principle of a government of laws and not of men. John Brown himself had learned the value of rhetoric as is evidenced in his final speech to the court which convicted him.

> ". . . had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends,—either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class,—and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment."

Above man's law to the end, but even then adding more high-blown words that the Northern press would use to begin "an idealization, unprecedented in the history of the nation." In such a climate reason and moderation could never hope to be popular.

* * *

In one way or another the American experiment has continued to face the major problem of distributing liberty and wealth. Who owns what and who is free to do what constitute matters of grave importance, but of equal importance are the mechanisms whereby change occurs: the strategies and conventions used by varying segments of the citizenry to alter a current, and to them undesirable, state of affairs. Scott, of course, does not deny that severe inequities and grievances continue to exist in our society, just as they existed in the America of the 1850s. What he deplores, however, is the existence of fanatics who place themselves above the law when they "work" for their causes. But even more, Scott deplores that such activity is duly justified and even embraced and supported in certain respectable circles. In retelling the story of John Brown and the well-to-do abolitionists who gave him money, arms, and encouragement, Scott makes us face up squarely to the raw facts of the terrorist tradition that remains with us today.

Terrorism still preys on the innocent and divides our people by promoting some "righteous" position outside the boundaries of our legal machinery. And so we are blest with the hypocrisy of the Radical Chic who in mouthing the "correct" slogans about liberating the people through confrontation and violence think they are serving the oppressed. Urban bombings, political kidnappings—slayings, sky-jackings, the resurgence of the KKK and other neo-Nazi groups, even the government's "official" use of provocateurs to infiltrate dissident organizations—all have become alarmingly commonplace. Alongside the mounting frustrations of contemporary life, in the public consciousness they almost merge into the realm of the acceptable.

Of course, organized rational force can on occasion prove necessary in the face of entrenched interests. Boycotts, strikes are possible without the violence of the terrorist, and Scott might have been more explicit regarding the range of options beyond mere talk that are open to citizens during instances of severe injustice. How, for instance, would Scott have evaluated Jefferson's appraisal of Daniel Shay's rebellion?

> "Even these revolts produce good. It brings people's attention to the problems of government. I hold that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing. I believe they are as necessary in the political world as storms are in the physical world. Little rebellions are a medicine necessary for the sound health of government."

Whatever these approaches are, however, they must be tied to grassroots support to be truly effective, and consequently this involves the use of slower and less-dramatic means. Yet in the end a more lasting redress of grievances is possible, one which doesn't destroy the very fabric of the society that allowed dissenting points of view to develop in the first place. Thanks to Otto Scott's energetic and intricate account of past delusions of righteous grandeur, terrorism may not in the future be so easy to rationalize away. □

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The Follies of Self

Christopher Lasch: *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations;* W. W. Norton & Co.; New York.

by Charles A. Moser

Historian Christopher Lasch, well-known for some time as a radical commentator on American life, in his latest book has come up with a statement of movement away from certain former predilections. It is unlikely that *The Culture of Narcissism* represents the final stage of his journey. But such is Lasch's position in American culture that the appearance of this record in itself is a cultural event of certain significance, for, as Lasch himself writes in his preface, "the political crisis of capitalism reflects a general crisis of Western [liberal] culture."

Lasch sets out to interpret contemporary American culture in terms of "narcissism," a concept which he defines at one point as "anxious self-scrutiny." Although the noun is the more important part of this definition, the adjective is also essential to it, for a diffuse anxiety, as at the ending of a major historical epoch, does seem to be a sign of our times. Although he is too often repetitive, and not always convincing, still his analysis of the American culture's narcissistic core is worth attention.

When Lasch extends individual narcissism into the society as a whole, he sees its cultural manifestations as including "the intense fear of old age and death, altered sense of time, fascination with celebrity, fear of competition, decline of the play spirit, deteriorating relations between men and women." Though the connection between "anxious self-scrutiny" and all these larger cultural phenomena is not invariably self-evident, certainly there is a good deal of substance to Lasch's negative critique.

It is beyond dispute that contemporary Americans can be self-centered to an extraordinary and unhealthy degree. The long decade's journey of some famous political radicals of the 1960s into absorption with the self is a striking example of the shift in American culture of the 1970s, and in fact Lasch demonstrates that the preconditions of such self-absorption were very much present in even what seemed superficially to be a highly political movement of a decade ago. Certainly, if one accepts his subtle yet useful distinction between celebrity and fame—celebrity is linked to the technological revolution which has brought us the mass media, and especially television—and his argument that "spectacle" is now "the dominant form of cultural expression," we may easily perceive that the political movements of the 1960s in large part depended upon spectacular, theatrical gestures by celebrities, who in their turn had been created by television, radio, movies, and the print media. Also, since these movements sought a mass base, their slogans had to be simplified to the greatest possible degree, while their programs left no room for the subtleties of argument or calm deliberation. Anyone in American academic life knows that a celebrity with little to say will attract many times larger university audiences than a well-known thinker bearing a message which requires some intellectual response from his listeners.

The modern emphasis upon the self has led, for example, to obsessive public concern over threats to physical health, and made possible absurd decrees from governmental organs on carcinogens in food and other substances, not to mention the mass hysteria over the nuclear mishap at Three Mile Island in which no one was injured, but which is already being successfully used for quite injurious political purposes. The contemporary obsession with mental health as well as physical health is also a symptom of our cultural malaise: as Lasch notes, the very nature of the psychiatric disorders most prevalent in our society has changed, in line, it would seem, with the dictates of fashion. No longer, he says, do patients suffer very much from "hysterical paralyses of the legs or hand-washing compulsions"; instead they fall prey to "pervasive feelings of emptiness and a deep disturbance of self-esteem," complaints which psychiatrists find much more difficult to treat successfully than the classical ones. Moreover, the general social acceptance of the notion of "mental health" has brought about a radical alteration in our perceptions of individual moral responsibility and the introduction of what Lasch calls "therapeutic justice," or treating the criminal as though he were ill rather than in need of punishment:

> "As retributive justice gives way to therapeutic justice, what began as a protest against moral oversimplification ends by destroying the very sense of moral responsibility . . . . Formerly law rested on an adversary relation between the state and the offender and acknowledged the superior power of the state by giving important procedural advantages to the defendant. Medical jurisprudence, on the other hand, implicates the offender in his own control."

At one extreme, self-absorption leads

> "With this bleak picture of capitalism's corrosion of values, Lasch updates *The Communist Manifesto.*"
>
> —*Nation*

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to the decomposition of society and culture. Beset by a fear of death, the narcissist seeks, above all, individual survival, to which any other ideals must be sacrificed. "People no longer dream of overcoming difficulties," Lasch writes, "but merely of surviving them." To that it might be added that an excessive preoccupation with survival often results in destruction. As Lasch himself comments in discussing the Marquis de Sade, "pure individualism . . . issued in the most radical repudiation of individuality." The key to that seemingly paradoxical transformation lies in the extreme character of the preoccupation: "individualism" within reasonable limits is valuable and necessary, but unlimited, or "pure" individualism results in disaster. Limitations there must be, for those very limitations provide society with its structure. Without them, it becomes chaotic and formless.

The narcissistic individual will seek to dissolve his links with others in the present, and also in the past and future. He will avoid commitments to causes or ideals beyond himself. Instead, he will either retreat into loneliness, or—as is more common in our society—resort to social or sexual promiscuity, in which he has contacts with so many others that he cannot form an emotional commitment to any of them. When such an attitude is widespread in a society, the traditional family—which is dependent upon long-term, intimate commitments—starts to dissolve. With sexual relations divorced from reproductive necessity, young adults either feel no responsibility at all to raise children, or else content themselves with "single-parent families," where there are relatively few day-to-day adjustments and compromises to be made. Lasch devotes one of his best chapters ("The Socialization of Reproduction and the Collapse of Authority") to the decline of the family, which distresses him. Indeed, at one point he speaks very positively of the families of the "old propertied elite" because they provide their children with a "sense of generational continuity."

The generational discontinuity which plagues American culture emerges with great force in its treatment of its aging population. Families leave parents to be cared for by society at large, by the specialists and "professionals" upon whom Lasch unleashes great scorn. Our culture values those things which youth can do, Lasch argues, and thus rejects the strengths of the elderly. One of their chief strengths, in Lasch's eyes, is the wisdom which derives from historical experience. "Our society," he writes, "holds an instrumental view of knowledge, according to which technological change constantly renders knowledge obsolete and therefore nontransferable." Since the younger generation believes the older generation has nothing of worth to offer, the latter is best placed out of sight and out of mind until such time as death removes it from the scene.

The "instrumental view of knowledge" has also played a crucial role in severing our society's cultural roots, and Lasch, as an historian, is deeply troubled by this phenomenon. He writes of the "fashionable sneer that now automatically greets every loving recollection of the past," and notes, quite correctly, that "people today resent anyone who . . . attempts to use the past as a standard by which to judge the present." His dedication to the past, his concern over the fact that in recent decades "enormous stretches of the 'Judaeo-Christian tradition' . . . have passed into oblivion," moved Lasch to compose an excellent chapter on the decay of American education from a historical perspective. He realizes that intellectual discipline has weakened and we have largely lost our cultural heritage because the schools have deliberately transformed themselves into something they should never have become. He believes in intellectual standards, and thinks it "reactionary" not to demand of even underprivileged children that they seek to satisfy those standards. He is so dedicated to excellence as to risk laying himself open to a charge of elitism: the rejection of a commitment to intellectual excellence in our schools, he says, "not only guarantees the monopolization of educational advantages by the few; it lowers the quality of elite education itself and threatens to bring about a reign of universal ignorance."

A commitment to excellence implies the desirability of competition, and competition (along with elitism) lies under one of the most powerful taboos of liberal contemporary culture. In a chapter on athletics, "The Degradation of Sport," Lasch defends both the notion of play as something desirable in itself ("People of all nations . . . ," he says, "know that games remain gloriously pointless") and the idea of healthy competition. Indeed it may be that the narcissist's dislike of competition—in which he must measure himself objectively against others—accounts for another facet of contemporary American life which Lasch castigates fervently: bureaucracy, and the bureaucratization of the spirit. For when individuals cooperate in a bureaucratic mode, without the discipline of the commercial balance sheet or the athletic scorecard, it is often difficult to tell which of them have "won" and which have "lost." As our society shifts further and further from the production of material commodities toward the provision of services, the accurate assessment of excellence becomes even more difficult. Perhaps the dislike of competition also has something to do with the retreat from politics which Lasch also criticizes in American life, for in an electoral contest there is always a winner, and losers too. The spirit of competition is still alive in sports and politics.

Lasch's critique of American culture in *The Culture of Narcissism* is presented as though based upon two great philosophical systems, those of Marx and Freud. The text is dotted with Freudian interpretations of various cul-

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tural phenomena, and Marxism crops up often enough: for instance, Lasch asserts that one of the difficulties with contemporary education is that it is regarded as a "commodity" to be consumed; he attempts to blame industrialism in part for the breakdown of the family; and he indulges in ritual denunciations of capitalist advertising. In the final analysis, though, Lasch's cultural critique is usually separable from its Freudian and Marxist underpinnings. In fact, by assembling certain statements spread throughout the book, one may arrive at a set of his positive prescriptions for society which have little to do with either Freud or Marx. One tends to applaud Lasch's belief in standards of excellence and in intellectual discipline, his profound respect for the past, his conviction that we must accept responsibility for the future of mankind as well. He holds that progress consists in the overcoming of obstacles. Moreover, he is dedicated to the concept of objective truth. He thinks that true education should "train people with the vanishing capacity for silence and self-containment." He would like to resurrect the work ethic, and hopes to "restore meaning and dignity to everyday life." He even speaks of the moral responsibilities of the individual, and of assisting people to "come to terms with the inescapable limits of their personal freedom and power—limits inherent in the human condition."

Such a positive program might cause the casual reader to conclude that Lasch's critique of contemporary American society resembles the conservative one, though it lacks any very deep metaphysical dimension. Realizing that such accusations would be raised against him, Lasch grapples with them in a short section toward the end of his book. Here he compares his own analysis of modern bureaucracy with that of Ludwig von Mises, recognizing many parallels between his own ideas and the Austrian's, but then maintaining that von Mises' fundamental premises differ from his. Where von Mises argues for a return to laissez-faire capitalism as the solution of the horrors of bureaucracy, Lasch holds that capitalism gives rise to an "inexorable trend toward economic concentration," and that "the struggle against bureaucracy therefore requires a struggle against capitalism itself." For a moment Lasch seems to have salvaged his radical credentials, but then, a few sentences later, he provides a brief vision of his ideal world of the future: "In order to break the existing pattern of dependence and put an end to the erosion of competence, citizens will have to take the solution of their own problems into their own hands. They will have to create their own 'communities of competence.' " But this is a vision of society to which the great majority of contemporary American conservatives would subscribe. Certainly they would agree with his reading of the essence of human nature and the quality of liberal contemporary culture.

In *The Culture of Narcissism,* then, Christopher Lasch arrives by curious paths at an analysis of American society based upon a conservative view of the essence of man clothed in Freudian and Marxist terminology. His use of such terminology, sincere as it may be, will not save his reputation among the bearers of liberal culture, and we must therefore regard the publication of this book as an act of intellectual courage on its author's part. □

Sweet Allende

Caroline Richards: *Sweet Country;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York and London.

by Lev Navrozov

Under Stalin, Russian writers "created works of literature" about the United States. Soon after Stalin's death, however, it was admitted that *any* Russian novel about a foreign country would be artificial and derivative no matter how ethnographically impeccable. American mass culture has not developed to this level of Soviet "sophistication," and Americans like Caroline Richards publish novels about any foreign country, from Russia to Chile, with equal ethnocentric aplomb or parochial innocence.

I refuse to sink below the post-Stalin level of Soviet propaganda and seriously consider *Sweet Country* as a "novel about Chile." Nor is it a novel anyway, in my perception. It can be defined as a fictionalized column by Anthony Lewis or Tom Wicker in the *New York Times* of six years ago.

I suppose there are two reasons for fictionalizing old newspaper columns. First, the author can make such a column more entertaining by injecting a fictitious love story or a plot. Caroline Richards (who is a professor of history at Earlham College) has devised for this purpose the following plot.

Eve, a Chilean lady (who could be taken for a New York lady, reader of *The New Yorker* and *National Geographic,* had she not referred so often to Pablo Neruda) works as a special assistant to Allende's wife—and has a beautiful love affair (just as in a *New Yorker* story) with a German named Helmut. Helmut departs very early in the book, yet the plot must go on. So, after the fall of Allende, Eve is first tortured, then released and requested to live in Allende's house "to prevent lawless plundering of the premises." Evidently Professor Richards assumes that those rulers whom she

Lev Navrozov, a Russian writer and literary critic, writes for the Chronicles *from New York.*

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detests are very much like American landlords or superintendents, worried above all about the safeguarding of property, such as Allende's house. However, in the spirit of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* a soldier finds a box of old bullets in the house. He threatens to report the box unless Eve yields to his lust. This gives Professor Richards a chance to write a series of sex scenes. Their sole relevance is to show that no tortures on earth, but only this kind of situation can force Eve to decide to leave Chile—so much does she love her country. But as she climbs the wall of the Italian Embassy, in accordance with dozens of earlier escape stories, "military men stationed on the roof of the house next door" fire and kill her. However, before her death, Eve delivers a 100-word-or-so speech in the best "revolutionary" bureaucratese: "Dear friends, those of you who have been seized by the spirit of hope and solidarity know neither . . ."

The second reason for fictionalizing old newspaper columns is that while a newspaper columnist, even one like Anthony Lewis or Tom Wicker, is bound by certain factual constraints, the author of a fictionalized column is bound by nothing, for his version is a work of fiction, is it not? For example, at this writing the *New York Times* (May 18, 1979) reports that a "Chilean court today freed 39 people arrested on orders of the Ministry of the Interior for demonstrating against a government ban." We cannot hear anything like that from Cuba, Russia or mainland China because there they have no court in the sense that we know it: the "court" in such regimes is a group of the totalitarian rulers' minor subordinates. However, in contrast to the *New York Times,* Professor Richards is not obligated to take this into account, for who can constrain the imagination of an artist?

What happened in Chile in 1973? Karl Marx believed that the more developed a free enterprise country was, the smaller its handful of "moneybags" and the greater its boundless sea of workers, paupers and proletarians would be. Therefore, it would be no problem for the latter to rise in their infinite numbers and *expropriate* the dwindling handful of "moneybags." Actually, the more a free enterprise country develops, the larger its middle class becomes—such as the truckers in Chile. Hence Allende's and his fellow-travelers' threat was not against a dwindling handful of "moneybags," as it should have been, according to Karl Marx, but against a middle class (such as the truckers) sufficiently large to strike back at the actual or potential expropriators—and very viciously too, for the mere threat of the loss of *their* property makes many people vicious. I have noticed that some of those same Americans who hail or take for granted expropriations in other countries are upset about a comparatively trifling loss of *their* money—through inflation, for example.

In this sense, the world perception of Salvador Allende, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Wicker or Professor Richards is anything but Marxist. History to them is not a struggle of social group interests. Rather it is their own version of a Sunday school sermon, according to which *they* and *their* property are Good, while other people's property is Evil, and so these Evil people must give it up with guilty smiles.

The only successful mass expropriation of a sufficiently large middle class has, so far, been the way of Lenin and

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture*:

Two Cultures

"Mr. William Styron was born in Virginia, served in the Marine Corps, studied at Duke University. The narrator of *Sophie's Choice* was born in Virginia, served in the Marine Corps, studied at Duke University. He is also a novelist. He is introduced to us by his school nickname, 'Stingo.' It is safe, therefore, to assume that Mr. Styron and Stingo are two different persons. However, Mr. Styron may be a whimsical ironist who has created a parody on the novel, and called this parody *Sophie's Choice,* allegedly written by a certain Stingo. That the book is a parody is clear from its very first paragraph."

from *"Moujik* 'n' Pulp Sandwich"
by Lev Navrozov

"We are told, for example, that Julian Sorel—the hero of *The Red and the Black*—is 'the first voice of ultimate class hatred in a major work of literature,' and that 'Stendhal identified himself with Julian.' However . . . Lord Snow asserts that the author of *The Charterhouse of Parma* 'would have liked to be an Italian aristocrat.' Possibly class hatred and the desire to be an Italian aristocrat can be made compatible; but one would like to be shown how."

from "Lord Snow on Art and Life"
by Dain A. Trafton

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Waste of Money—The American Proscenium
Screen—Music—Liberal Culture—Journalism
Polemics & Exchanges

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Trotsky, Stalin or Castro: that is totalitarianism. Only a totalitarian regime can "liquidate the bourgeoisie as a class" and thus break down its resistance to the "expropriation." What does this mean: to "liquidate the bourgeoisie as a class?" It means not necessarily to exterminate it down to the last person, but to decimate, deport, torture, scatter, reduce its members to pariahs, in order to break it completely as any force of resistance.

Professor Richards gives Chapter 5 the following epigraph from Trotsky: "A revolution, more than any other enterprise, has to be carried through to the end." But what sounds, to Professor Richards, like a safe, beautiful, romantic American university word—revolution—meant to the Chilean middle class the threat of extermination. The middle class did not want this "enterprise" to be "carried to the end," as it was in Russia—indeed, to the end of murdering Trotsky himself as well.

Very jauntily *Sweet Country* describes a certain beautiful hero, an expropriator (and liquidator?), Comandante Carlos, "who had sent a shiver of fear down the backs of southern farmers . . ." This is beautiful, of course. The trouble is that as a result, farmers—southern, northern, Chilean, American, German, Russian—begin to wait for *their* chance to "send a shiver of fear down the backs" of such Comandantes.

The question which occupies the protagonists of *Sweet Country* is this: Does Allende match the great Castro? Indeed, when Helmut says that "somehow I don't think" Allende is the "man that Fidel Castro is," Eve "felt stung by Helmut's remark." She wants to believe that great as Castro is, Allende matches him.

But if Castro sets such a lofty example for Allende, how could the middle class of Chile be sure that Allende was not secretly following Castro's clandestine preparations for the "liquidation of the middle class"—perhaps with Castro's (that is, Soviet) aid? So instead of waiting to be "liquidated" (which is even more unpleasant than being "expropriated," incredible as this may seem to Professor Richards), the more brutal or fear-ridden elements of the Chilean middle class (and there are such elements among, say, American truckers, too) rushed out, following the fall of Allende, to "liquidate" those who had threatened to "expropriate" and "liquidate" them in the manner of the great Castro, the great Lenin and other such greats. The difference is that if Allende had first followed the lofty example of these greats, the "liquidation" would never have ended until the totalitarian night over Chile had become complete and perhaps eternal. As it is, we learn from the *New York Times* that a Chilean court ruled against the government's ban of a demonstration.

Professor Richards lists her statistics of victims following the overthrow of Allende: 10,000 dead and 20,000 imprisoned, of whom 75 percent were tortured. I am prepared to mourn every victim of brutality and fear. But since Professor Richards gives *statistics,* would it not be fair to give the statistics of victims of the regime of Castro whom, according to Eve, Allende matched in greatness?

Instead, Professor Richards describes torture in great detail. An American writer I know lives in Hollywood to watch the demand firsthand. Three years ago the demand was torture, and so he wrote books where Arabs torture Jews or vice versa. Then he sold the movie rights. This is called professionalism. The descriptions of torture by Professor Richards are perhaps as professional. But what bearing does this have on literature, art, knowledge, intelligence, humanism?

Cruelty, torture, humiliation or the threat of them, with respect to a certain social group, produces revenge of defense in kind. Is this so difficult to understand? Instead, Professor Richards has written a sugary 372-page sermon (with *professional* torture scenes) about sweet Allende and the evil reactionaries, such as Chilean truckers, prone to murder and torture for no reason at all except their own evilness.

"Caroline Richards's *Sweet Country* is a first-class political novel . . . . There's bound to be more than history in Professor Richards's future."
—*New York Times Book Review*

"The novel is rich; the characters are articulate and complex."
—*Publishers Weekly*

Sweet, sweet are Allende and his supporters. Eve expresses herself only beautifully: "deeper even than Greek tragedy or Neruda's poetry." Helmut speaks in classical Greek to describe his love for Eve. A tailor makes a speech which occupies three-quarters of a page and ends: "For this I shall live and die a leftist." Allende's italicized speech spreads over almost two pages. The "Chilean working class" even loves Allende's way of "living and dressing like a bourgeois," and "never begrudged him his food or his women or his imported liquor." Fidel Castro's speech is presented by Professor Richards in verse as an epigraph to Chapter 13. This reminds one of a world-famous Soviet composer who claimed that what Stalin said was music.

On the other hand, *all* of Allende's enemies are not only evil, but also ugly, lifeless, pompous, hypocritical and repulsive in every way possible. The women of Santiago who march against Allende are fat because they are rich. All Allende supporters speak like a university library, an anti-Allende university professor's "pronouncements" are "crabbed."

The naive Manichean propaganda

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zeal of Professor Richards would be astonishing even for Soviet literature today. After the fall of Allende, a certain lady "gasped at her bill for oil and sugar." This resembles Soviet novels about Nazi Germany, according to which all Germans, except for a dwindling handful of "moneybags," were starving paupers. Soviet propaganda could not admit that an evil regime may be quite prosperous. In an evil regime the prices of oil and sugar *must* be sky-high. Similarly, when children sing in the post-Allende country, this is a "thin, wobbly melody," and the entire Christmas party is a "miserable flop," for successful children's parties are not possible in an evil regime either.

Dostoyevsky said that under a certain kind of sentimentality there is blood. The sugary sentimentality of Professor Richards, mingling with her professional torture descriptions, adds to the ignorance, smugness and bigotry in this world, and hence there is, indeed, blood under her sweetness. □

Stans' Stand

Maurice H. Stans: *The Terrors of Justice;* Everest House; New York.

by Charles E. Rice

Who needs another book on Watergate? Unfortunately, we all do and this is the book. Watergate in a sense was a bloodless coup d'état, in which the ruler was deposed not by tanks and guns but by typewriters and television. The President endured the ignominy of resignation and many of his men suffered conviction and imprisonment. But we the people did not emerge unscathed. Since President Nixon's abdication on August 9, 1974, we have endured an orgy of self-congratulation by the media heroes of the coup. Worse still is the claim of establishment academicians and pundits that Watergate is a watershed in the history of public morality, that Nixon's men committed unexampled crimes and that the affair must lead us to a new and higher morality.

The trouble with this mainstream characterization of Watergate is that it is substantially, though not entirely, untrue. It is true, of course, that Nixon's lieutenants and their chief were often wholly pragmatic in their approach to moral issues. In this they reflected the dominant positivism of American legal education and the dominance of the pragmatic ethic in much of American life. But the media and the ideological prosecutors carried the Watergate inquiry to an extreme by seizing upon relatively minor sins of their opponents to effect a change in regime while leaving unnoticed the worse offenses of their political allies. Sooner or later, however, the real story of Watergate will penetrate the public consciousness. When it does, the major credit should go to this volume.

Maurice Stans, former Secretary of Commerce and Chairman of President Nixon's finance committee, is an honest man who was compelled by the exhaustion of his personal and financial resources to plead guilty to two counts of nonwillfully receiving campaign contributions which, unknown to him, were technically illegal and three counts, also nonwillful, of late reporting of contributions. The record justifies his conclusion that "after the 1972 Presidential race the Nixon committees and their officers were singled out for prosecutorial attention, while serious violations by Democratic candidates were tolerated and candidates for seats in the Congress by and large got full clearance by prosecutorial inattention."

It was a time of variable standards of justice, with the media bringing public pressure to bear on the courts and the Internal Revenue Service and prosecutors raising selective enforcement of the law to the level of principle.

This review will not attempt a summary of Watergate. Rather, it merely offers the reviewer's impression that this is one book that cannot be ignored. I picked it up reluctantly, regarding a commitment to read another "Watergate apology" as only slightly less onerous than a commitment to the county road gang. That reluctance, however, was quickly dispelled. From the outset the book is factual and only occasionally rhetorical. Those facts speak for themselves. One of the most telling passages recounts the erroneous and contradictory accounts issued by AP, UPI, the *New York Times, Parade* magazine, the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Star* of the testimony of Hugh Sloan, Jr. Those accounts claimed that Stans personally approved the payment of $199,000 to Watergate defendant G. Gordon Liddy. Although the *Times* ultimately retracted the charge the effect was to link Stans in the public mind with the Watergate payoffs. The victim of such erroneous if not willfully mendacious reporting has virtually no recourse under the law. Which leads to one aspect of Watergate that is often overlooked: the role of the Supreme Court in giving to the media a virtual license to lie.

Beginning with *New York Times* v. Sullivan, in 1964, the Supreme Court

"This portrait of a Middle Western naif victimized by Washington sharpies simply does not ring true."

—*New York Times Book Review*

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has held that the media can be held liable for defamation to public officials and public figures only if the defamation was published with actual malice, that is, with knowledge of its falsehood or with reckless disregard as to its truth or falsity. Even a private person defamed by the media must show some fault, as determined by state law, in order to recover. These holdings replaced the common law privilege of fair comment under which a defendant would be liable for a false statement of material facts or if he made the statement with conscious ill will toward the plaintiff. Recently, in the Herbert case, April, 1979, the Supreme Court interpreted its new rules so as to allow a plaintiff to inquire into the reporter's state of mind in preparing the article. Without such an inquiry, the person defamed is incapable of proving actual malice. But whatever the effect of the new rule in the Herbert case, it is plain that the Watergate media extravaganza was facilitated by the fact that, at least as of that time, the Court had given the media a license to lie. Even granting that the errors were honest and not willful, a victim such as Stans was helpless before the onslaught.

There were many participants in the assassination of Stans' character, including Senator Frank Moss of Utah, candidate George McGovern, his campaign manager, Larry O'Brien, *Washington Post* reporters Woodward and Bernstein, the self-styled "citizens' lobby," *Common Cause,* and Senator Sam Ervin and his Democratic colleagues on the Senate Watergate Committee. The author notes the Committee's inaction when Hubert Humphrey's finance chairman invoked the Fifth Amendment and refused to testify, an inaction which contrasted with its savage exposure of every dereliction, real or imagined, by the Nixon people.

> "What the public did not know was the blatant hypocrisy of the four Democratic members of the Committee, all of whom sanctimoniously interrogated witnesses, they said, to 'get the facts on the record.' In 1964, when Bobby Baker, a protégé of Senators Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kerr, was charged with running an influence-peddling operation in Washington for high stakes, the Democrats controlling the Senate had blocked an investigation; Ervin, Talmadge, and Inouye voted time after time to prevent the facts from coming out."

Mr. Stans and John Mitchell were acquitted by a New York federal trial jury of ten counts of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and perjury. This trial prompts the author to criticize the grand jury system. As often administered the system provides unscrupulous prosecutors with a means to harass suspects through indictments issued by compliant grand juries who hear only the prosecutor's side of the case. The author is particularly critical of then United States Attorney Whitney North Seymour and argues strongly for the reimbursement of costs and legal fees to innocent defendants.

In Chapter 16, entitled appropriately, "The Media Binge," Mr. Stans recites numerous instances of inaccurate and unfounded news reporting by *Time, Newsweek,* the *Miami Herald,* the *Washington Star,* columnist Jack Anderson and others:

> "Without doubt, investigative journalism accomplished some worthy objectives in the Watergate affair, but it also trampled over many blameless people in the rush to accusation, and never went back after it was over to help them on to their feet.
>
> "There is a permanence about published stories, true or untrue, that stems from the fact that press 'morgues' are long-lived. A subject can be pinioned forever by one inaccurate account, repeated each time he makes the news, because it is almost impossible to purge a morgue of misinformation. A lie can be permanent.
>
> "Nothing mars the integrity of the press more than its unwillingness to acknowledge its errors, even when confronted with convincing evidence. Retractions are a one-in-a-million event, and even if a person is persuasive or persistent enough to get one, it never reaches more than a tiny part of the readers who saw the mistake. And, even if it could reach the original audience, that audience would by then have passed the mistake along to a second audience, which would be altogether unreachable. The chances of a correction being made are even less in radio and television. Once a 'fact' has been broadcast in print or on the air it can move back and forth and in many directions, and no force in the world can dictate where it will stop. And no force can repair the damage that inaccuracy can bring."

With respect to Woodward and Bernstein's book, *All the President's Men,* Mr. Stans comments on their insinuations against him, "All of this was plain crap, and the authors knew it." "One of the most scurrilous and careless messes to follow" the Woodward and Bernstein book, according to Stans, was Jimmy Breslin's *How the Good Guys Finally Won.* This, according to Stans, "was clearly one more book written from discredited newspaper clippings. These books were all in the spirit of the times. Accuracy gave way to sensationalism, with no concern about where the chips might fall and who they might hit. And how does the victim correct the falsities in a book?"

Mr. Stans recommends the adoption of limited restraints on media publication, particularly where it might interfere with the right to a fair trial. And he urges that the Supreme Court ought to "open the courts to persons with reputations to lose, whether they are in public life or not, to allow them to sue for libel when they are improperly and incorrectly maligned by the media. While there need be no prior legal restraint, immunity from liability should

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not follow."

This reviewer is not a devotee of Richard Nixon. It makes him feel good that this should not be regarded as a pro-Nixon book, despite the author's high regard for the former President. This is a book about injustice parading as justice. It is a book about power divorced from responsibility, and the arrogant abuse of that power by the molders of opinion. □

Foolish Consistency

Aryeh Neier: *Defending My Enemy: American Nazis, the Skokie Case, and the Risks of Freedom;* E. P. Dutton & Co.; New York.

by Clarence Carson

"A foolish consistency," Emerson said, "is the hobgoblin of little minds." The American Civil Liberties Union has time and again provided dramatic proof of the validity of Emerson's adage. More often than is generally known the ACLU has come to the rescue of and defended the Ku Klux Klan and American Nazis in the courts. 'Tis said that when George Lincoln Rockwell, the late Nazi leader, traveled around the country he took a list of the representatives of the ACLU in the cities he would visit with him. If in trouble, he would contact the local representative, and likely as not the ACLU would come to his legal defense.

This quixotic activity reached a new plateau when the ACLU defended the Nazi effort to make a protest march through the streets of Skokie, Illinois. Skokie has a large number of Jewish inhabitants among whom there are a goodly number who had suffered in concentration camps. As if that were not enough, Jews are well represented in the membership of and play a leading role in the ACLU. On top of that, the ACLU lost several thousand members and contributions estimated at several thousands of dollars.

Dr. Carson writes his essays from Alabama.

Why? Why would an organization with no known sympathy for Nazis go to such efforts to see that they were allowed to march in the streets? Aryeh Neier wrote this book with the stated purpose of answering this. His answers amount to: first, the ACLU is devoted to the principle of defending everyone's right to free speech; second, he maintains that Jews have a special interest in the right to free speech. They are a minority in the United States; they have often been persecuted; therefore, they should defend the rights of all who are unpopular and persecuted. He states his case:

> "Jews cannot hide from the Nazis in Skokie. For their own safety's sake, they must give the devil—the Nazis—the benefit of law. It is dangerous to let the Nazis have their say. But it is more dangerous by far to destroy the laws that deny anyone the power to silence the Jews if Jews should need to cry out to each other and to the world for succor. When the time comes for Jews to speak, to publish, and to march in behalf of their own safety, Illinois and the United States must not be allowed to interfere. The Nazis, I respond to those who ask how I, a Jew, can defend freedom for Nazis, must be free to speak and because I must be free to speak."

Mr. Neier is guilty of a foolish consistency. The ACLU has committed funds to show that they are consistent in their foolish consistency. American liberals are caught, too, in a foolish consistency, though many are less adamant about it than the leadership of the ACLU. But what are they being consistent with? Mr. Neier claims that it is in defense of freedom of speech. Ever since its founding, the ACLU has professed its belief that speech should be as free as the air. It is of such moment, they have held, that everyone's right to it should be defended.

Now, I think that the ACLU has been foolishly consistent in defense of the freedom of speech. They have been foolishly consistent because freedom of speech is only one-half of a principle. All freedom has a corollary, namely, that in its exercise you do no injury to others. The ACLU has fought consistently over the years to prevent people from being held responsible for what they said and wrote even when it was bursting with the potential for injury to others. That is a foolish consistency.

But free speech was not the real issue in the Skokie case, despite the fact that Mr. Neier invokes it throughout the pages of his book. The leadership of the ACLU was not being foolishly consistent in defending the free speech of Nazis. They were defending something else. What they were defending was this: *The right of groups to use intimidation to get their way.* I am aware of the strained argument that in order to speak freely it is necessary, say, to wear black uniforms, jackboots, and Nazi armbands (or to fly a red flag, or to sport obscenities on T-shirts, or to pull off one's clothes in public, or whatever). Any lawyer who would advance so feeble an argument before a court should be sentenced forthwith to six days of fasting in sackcloth and ashes; at the end of which he should be made to return to the court and explain the difference between speech and symbols. With his mind thus clarified even a veteran ACLU lawyer could probably come up with a passable distinction.

There is one other possible issue to be got out of the way before taking up the real one. It is the constitutional right of assembly. If there was a constitutional issue in the Skokie case, this was the

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most obvious one. The relevant portion of the First Amendment reads this way: "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging . . . the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." Just what grievance the Nazis had which necessitated their assembling in Skokie, Illinois (on the streets) in order to get the government to redress it has not yet been specified. In order to invoke this right the ACLU has had to reconstrue it. Their version of it would read something like this: "The right of groups to use the force of government to enable them to assemble wherever they see fit, to call the attention of whomever they choose to whatever it is that is bothering them," or something of the sort. In short, the First Amendment can be invoked in this case only by twisting the Constitution into a tangled mass. The ACLU has very nearly succeeded in doing this, of course.

The Nazis had no imperative need to assemble on the streets in Skokie, Illinois. They did not have to travel there in order to be able to say what they had on their minds. Clearly, what they had in mind was a deliberate provocation. Swastikas could only stir anguish and anger in many of those who might have witnessed the march. (It never took place, despite the fact that the courts cleared the way for it.) The *modus operandi* of Nazism is the use of the group to intimidate, and that is the "right" which the courts vindicated. In this, they are not alone. It is the *modus operandi* of all collectivists, whether they are Ku Kluxers, Communists, socialists of whatever flavor, labor unionists, or whatnot.

Unfortunately, Mr. Neier's vision is distorted by collectivism. It appears to be the case for the ACLU leadership as well. This is not the only possible common ground they share with the Nazis. The Nazis do not believe in free speech; they believe in breaking the heads of those who speak against them. The Nazis do not believe in the right of peaceable assembly; they believe in assembling in order to have brawls. They are collectivists, however. They believe in collective action, collective guilt, and collective well-being. Mr. Neier gives the game away when he argues, in effect, that Jews must defend the right of the Nazis to collective action in order to be able to act collectively themselves.

I believe that Mr. Neier is mistaken. What he claims to seek is security from persecution in the future. I doubt that the way to achieve that is to insure that all groups can engage in intimidation. It seems to me the best protection against persecution is one in which groups are not permitted to intimidate. It is this kind of protection which individual Jews need *vis à vis* Nazis or any other groups. Moreover, it is a primary function of government to protect the inhabitants from intimidation by groups. When it fails to do so, it yields up some portion of its monopoly of power to groups. If all groups are equally entitled to intimidate, they will then contend for the power that has been yielded to them. That is what happened in the Weimar Republic in the 1920s, and set the stage for the Nazis to come to power.

Mr. Neier has made only a partial explanation of the reason for being of the ACLU. He either skirts or ignores the broad question of why there should be a special organization whose main function appears to be to defend the members of other organizations. (I am not, of course, questioning the *legal* right for such a voluntary organization to exist.) If Nazis, Communists, Ku Kluxers need legal defense, why don't they pay for it? What could bring into being an organization whose purpose it is to defend the rights of other groups and organizations to agitate, propagate, provoke, and intimidate the populace at large?

In crucial respects, the ACLU is the legal wing of liberalism which dominates American intellectual life. Liberalism is bent on transforming America, albeit gradually, and step by step. Ultimately, liberals use government power in their efforts at transformation. But the impetus for transformation comes from radical and reformist groups and organizations. The ideas that they advance are often unpopular and those who share them are in the minority. The tactics they use to get attention and propagate their ideas arouse resistance. Often they can only continue to act by getting special protection from the police and even aid from government in providing places to assemble and means for carrying on their activities.

The basic task of the ACLU has been performed in getting the Constitution reconstrued and local laws negated, laws by which groups are restrained and limited. The Skokie case was an excellent example of this kind of activity. The municipal government of Skokie did wish to deny the Nazis the use of the streets for such a march. They did attempt to require the posting of bond as insurance against damage that might be done. The ACLU attorneys contended against every effort by the municipality to protect itself from intrusion by an unwelcome group. (The bond requirement, since it was difficult or impossible for the Nazis to get it, was a limitation on free speech, the attorneys alleged. If one consistently follows that line of argument, the requirement for liability insurance for automobiles is a limitation on free speech.) In the final analysis, the courts must be made to force governments to provide a meeting place and police protection for radical groups.

Groups and organizations are always potentially dangerous. They are especially a danger to lone individuals and to unpopular minorities. They need to be restrained, limited, and held responsible for their acts. When government becomes their tacit ally, they endanger everyone. The defense of free and responsible speech is no doubt a worthy cause. The defense of a free and

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responsible press is a worthy undertaking. *Peaceable* assemblies are no proper concern of anyone. Unfortunately, liberals want freedom without responsibility to prevail in the arena of intellectual activity. The ACLU has been their handmaiden in establishing the legal conditions for this. Those who defend freedom without responsibility are finally responsible for the loss of freedom. Only little minds should be capable of such a foolish inconsistency. □

Thanks for the Mammaries

Thomas Weyr: *Reaching for Paradise: The Playboy Vision of America;* Times Books; New York.

by Kenneth Kolson

Those of us who must live with the fear of flying—I mean in airplanes—have developed certain rituals to exorcise the demons of the runway. My ritual used to be: one Sinarest (ingested in the terminal with a double manhattan); a copy of *Sporting News* (spread out on my lap); and another double manhattan (as soon as possible after take-off). But recently I have found a new way of spelling relief. There, right under my tray, tucked away in the pouch with the card showing the emergency exits and the many safety features of my DC-10—there, if my seat-back is in the full upright position, I may reach for this intellectual chloroform that will numb my reasoning faculties for the duration of the flight. What is this miracle drug? It is called the "inflight magazine."

So it was that when I boarded a flight from Pittsburgh to Baltimore recently, it was with a swaggering self-assurance derived from the knowledge that *Flightime,* the Allegheny Airlines species of this particular genus of space-age journalism, would be nestled securely in front of the unwavering knees that would deliver me to Aisle 14, Seat C. My faith in *Flightime* was amply rewarded. There was, in this issue, an article on "Surefire Barbecues," a special section "for women going places," the requisite profile of a liberal Democratic Senator, and—gad, how dame fortune had smiled on me this day!—the one ingredient fully guaranteed to induce somnambulism: an article by scientific chic writer Carl Sagan (entitled "In Defense of Robots," no less). One whiff of the prose of this eminento, I felt sure, would turn *me* into a robot, a zombie; it would be like shooting up the old cranium with novocaine.

Of course the publishers of these magazines are willing to print the work of the sages of modern civilization—Sagan, Erica Jong, Joyce Brothers, Alex Haley et al.—for the same reason that television shows are produced: because filler is needed for the spaces in between the advertisements. For the acrophobic who happen also to be immune to the mesmeric power of Carl Sagan (wretched blighters), the ads in *Flightime* will not fail to produce the senseless state that can only be brought on by unrelenting hedonism to a point well beyond satiety. Every conceivable type of expensive consumer gadget is marketed here: state-of-the-art stereo systems; the Kawasaki "Jet Ski"; suntan lotion for every shade of skin; the latest creations by Porsche-Audi; motorhomes; cameras; a cologne packaged in a phallus; a contraption that allows one to produce one's own slide/sound presentation at home ("Don't go to China without one"); booze; swimsuits; American Express Cards; home telephone answering systems. It is enough to send one careening to the vomitorium.

Jaded as I am, I had sincerely thought that *Flightime* could provide me with no fresh thrills. So it was with genuine stupefaction that I spied, on page 44 of this particular issue, the full-page ad for *Playboy* magazine that shall be described anon.

In the grand old Madison Avenue tradition of "Dewar's Profiles," the ad takes an up-close-and-personal look at one Mr. Bill Sargent, who is described (take a deep breath) as follows:

> "Marine biologist; Oceanographer; Underwater Photographer; Expert in Oceanic Law; Consultant to World Governments, Private Business and Environmental Groups; Archaeologist; Novelist."

> "I would have liked to learn more about the technical side of preparing those nude fantasies."
>
> —Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, *New York Times*

Whew. In addition, Mr. Sargent, who is pictured at the helm of what certainly must be his yacht, is a prototypical Preppie: not an ounce of flab; hair meticulously coiffed in the wind-blown look; nautical sweater; Sperry Top-Siders there by implication. In the narrative it is revealed that he is married; is a movie buff; travels a lot; and spends his leisure time "putting together a new stereo system" when he isn't getting used to his "zippy new energy-efficient car." Bill does as much skiing as he can fit in, and he knows how to change diapers (!). He looks exactly like what Elliot Richardson must have looked like at his age, which is 32. Is it possible that this wholesome, incredibly talented scion of a very proper New England family ("son of a governor of Massachusetts, great-great-grandson of a

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great American painter")—is it possible that *he* reads *Playboy?* (Is the Pope Polish?)

> "Yes, of course I read *Playboy.* I say 'of course' because I've been reading it for so long. It, more than any other magazine I know of is involved in the mainstream of our culture and values. It's also a way of keeping up with the people who are shaping and changing things in this world. Besides, the *Playboy* cartoons are great."

What? What? No, he *couldn't* have said that! With this blow to the solar plexus the mind reels, the eyes refuse to focus. We are staggered; but squinting, we look at the words again. Sure enough, they are all there, in the proper order: "Besides, the *Playboy* cartoons are great."

The cartoons. *He buys it for the cartoons.*

The mind's eye sees Mr. Sargent relaxing in his solar-heated living room—having a Dewar's, probably. Foxy lady at his side, four or five Brubeck albums stacked up on the new turntable, he peruses the latest issue of *Playboy,* which has come in the mail today. Having studied the Andy Young interview (very heavy), he stops to jot down a few notes for his next novel, takes a long, contemplative draft on his pipe—Sutliff Private Stock, probably—pauses, then returns to his magazine. Grasping each page with moistened thumb and forefinger, he turns them, resolutely, one by one—flip, flip—past the Raquel Welch spread (No. Can it be?)—flip, flip—his face impassive, inscrutable, he scans the stills from the latest Russ Meyer movie—flip, flip, flip—fumbling only momentarily (Damn! Clumsy centerfold!) over the Playmate of the Month, and maintains his composure until finally, emitting an audible moan or two, he comes . . . yes, yes, at last . . . to the Buck Brown cartoon! And now, . . . oh ecstasy, . . . Gahan Wilson! And, . . . John Dempsey (sigh).

No, the naked ladies of *Playboy* do not arouse Bill's prurient interest; his subscription doesn't turn *him* into a pervert, drooling and panting over the girls with their legs spread all over the camera lens. Uh-uh. The message of the ad is so reassuring: "the same kind of men who read *Time* and *Newsweek* read *Playboy.* Only a lot more of them read *Playboy* . . . The *Playboy* reader. His lust is for life." And stereos, and Porsches, and yachts, and cartoons, and Carl Sagan, and . . .

Which brings us to the point of this review: *Playboy* would seem to be a kind of inflight magazine with boobs.

Now there are worse things, to be sure. *Playboy* is not genuinely vulgar, for one thing. It never has been, not even during the worst convulsions of its several identity crises. The most violent of these came in the early '70s, when only the *Playboy* casinos were making money. The company was overextended, badly managed, embroiled in scandal, and editorially schizophrenic. Somehow Hef had lost his touch. The feminists were at his throat—and no wonder; this was the man who had humiliated women by showing us their bodies (or was it because he stuck little bunny tails and bow ties on them? I forget.) In any event, the beleaguered *Playboy* empire looked for a while as if it might be devoured by the sexual revolution it is supposed to have begun; by what Hefner rather grandiloquently termed "the *Playboy* Philosophy." Hefner, whose original success was inextricably bound up in his posing as the champion of human rights, of an expansive interpretation of the First Amendment, found himself in mortal danger of being outraunched by his less inhibited imitators, *Penthouse* and *Hustler,* which exploited the new licentiousness and precipitated the War of the Split Beaver.

This subject is a bit gamy, but it must be addressed. I will try to do so discreetly. A "Ziegler" cartoon (you see Bill Sargent and I share a fetish) in a recent issue of *The New Yorker* proposes to depict the "History of Rock." The cartoon consists of six pictorial representations of the same person—same features, same expressionless face, same posture, same guitar in hand. The six pictures are distinguished only by tonsorial and sartorial considerations. Rock music is shown in its chronological development, so to speak, from 1956 (close-cropped hair, narrow lapels, pegged pants: an utterly conventional Johnny Tillotson or Tommy Sands) through 1961 (flashy sport shirt, hair a little longer: Jan and Dean, perhaps), 1964 (long hair combed forward, moddish suit, spiked heels: John Lennon before he got religion), 1968 (sandals, longer hair, moustache, flower: Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band), 1974 (bizarre, frizzed hair, tattered zoot suit: Jerry Rubin with a guitar), to finally, 1979 (close cropped hair, narrow lapels, pegged pants, . . .). Putting it more economically, the cartoon portrays the "evolution" of rock from Neil Sedaka to Neil Sedaka. In a way this is the thesis of Thomas Weyr's thoroughly competent book on the history of *Playboy.* To wit: *Playboy* owed its original success to the fact that it was a slick, consumption- and status-oriented man's magazine that exploited the huge market potential that lay in the interstices between *Esquire* and *Argosy;* it was thrown for a loop by the '60s, tried to appeal to the counterculture but failed because Hef was too much of a prig; and then saved itself in the late '70s by once again becoming a slick, consumption- and status-oriented man's magazine—an inflight magazine with boobs.

This "full-circle" theory of social change, the idea behind Ziegler's cartoon and implicit in Weyr's book, is appealing, but it is wrong. The fact is that while *Playboy* (like rock music) is, in 1979, very much the same thing that it was during the 1950s, it is not *exactly* the same thing, and the difference, in this case, is crucial. During the '50s

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there was, of course, pornography. We used to get it at the newsstand from the old man with the black cigar who would produce it, literally, from "under-the-counter." Sometimes it would circulate through the boys' locker room—usually pictures of grotesque Fellini-type whores with missing teeth and billowing rolls of flab. It was available, all right, but one came by it furtively. We knew what we were doing; and there was something honest about that.

But now that "the *Playboy* Philosophy" has been declared innocent—or at least innocuous—by the grand jury of public opinion; now that, as Bill Sargent puts it, it "is involved in the mainstream of our culture and values," it is acquired, and consumed, as thoughtlessly as a pound of bologna. You pack Mildred and the kids in the station wagon, buzz down to the local drugstore, plunk your two bucks down on the counter, and bring home artful pictures of absolutely gorgeous young women with their skirts hiked up to here—and beyond. There they are, all laid out in a row: this one vaguely resembling your neighbor's wife; that one, you fancy, the delicious little tart you interviewed for a secretarial position this morning. They have straight teeth, deep suntans, college educations. Every one of them is a former cheerleader, a current jogger, concerned about ecology. Middle class. When you get home you throw them on the coffee table promiscuously with Alistair Cooke and Kenneth Clark, a public pronouncement that you buy *Playboy* for the cartoons, or the literature, or the interviews, or whatever—anything but the crotch shots. It's true: the difference between the '50s and the late '70s, thanks to a number of court decisions and the triumph of "the *Playboy* Philosophy," is that we don't give pornography a second thought anymore. What's missing today is the plain brown wrapper . . . and a little honesty. □

Dress Gray, Think Pink

Lucian K. Truscott: *Dress Gray;* Doubleday & Co.; Garden City, New York.

by Edward J. Walsh

From Cooper to Crane, from Dos Passos to Hemingway to James Jones and Irwin Shaw, stories about soldiers and Army life, sagas of men and war have acquired a peculiarly native flavor, that has something to do with this country's history. Even the Vietnam novels, such as Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War,* remain in this vein; though Caputo was torn by his antiwar sentiments, his book essentially and emphatically reaffirms the quality of soldiering that, through good novels and bad, has always been evoked by American writers. That is, the quality of *honor.* But it is missing from Lucian K. Truscott's *Dress Gray*—one suspects, on purpose.

It has been argued by several of the flock of critics who have commented on *Dress Gray* that it is no less a tale of honor, or at least boldness and courage, than the best of our soldier literature. But the literary wags who have praised *Dress Gray* as a risqué and irreverent jab at stodgy West Point do so in a spirit of forced tolerance that seeks exhaustively to find some evidence of talent in a novel they recognize as "antiestablishment."

Much has already been said about the oddities of *Dress Gray:* the cardboard characters, including the main one, Rysam Parker Slaight III, a farm boy made to sound like a denizen of a ghetto pool hall; the endless use of the word "guys"; the inane dialogue; the sheer silliness of the plot. It would probably be a mistake to take Truscott's book seriously as literature; in a remark in a widely-circulated *New York Times* portrait, he explained that he wanted to write a book people would buy, and not "only 5000 copies." *Dress Gray* was the result, and for it Truscott has received handsome sums. But his book is being taken seriously by many, precisely because of its calculated iconoclasm. Truscott, a 1969 West Point graduate, has made it clear that he wrote the book for the money, and that he couldn't care less what people think of his alma mater, or of the stubbornly enduring values the United States Military Academy has always symbolized. But it is no coincidence that what praise the book has received has come from influential sources, and mostly from people who don't like what West Point stands for. For that reason, *Dress Gray* ought to be dissected, line by crooked line, to isolate what it suggests rather than merely what it says.

Briefly, a cadet is found murdered in a lake near West Point, and he is discovered to have been a homosexual. General Sherrill Hedges, the commandant of cadets and a villainously ambitious plotter, seeks to keep the circumstances of the death quiet in order to implicate his superior, the Academy's superintendent, in a cover-up, and thus leap past him in Army seniority.

Enter Ry Slaight, upperclassman, and a good "guy." He gets wind of the matter, and his knowledge forces him to solve the case. The victim had been in his platoon as a plebe—the best of them all he was. This unsavory suggestion, that homosexuals excel at West Point, passes eventually as the chapters grind on, full of digressions and the murky meanderings of Truscott's prose, which are intended only to make the book thicker. Practically all of the dozen or so characters are treated to long biographies: almost the entire lives of the two generals, the military lawyer,

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Slaight's Israeli (Israeli?) girlfriend, and, of course, the victim are heaved at the reader. Great gobs of verbiage about the "power structure" of "Woo Poo" are generated, bemoaning the "system" that builds men like General Hedges and his accomplices, who range from the sadistic Major Grimshaw to the omnipotent Pentagon bureaucrat William Beatty. Like all cover-ups lately, this one extends to the heart of our government, and, Truscott insists, tells us what manner of men we are.

Truscott dangles his string of slanders of West Point through the novel on a series of nearly independent vignettes, which are at the same time digressions. They begin with small observations on the cruel life of the cadet: the brutal treatment of Mr. Slaight by Major Grimshaw; the pathological desperation of cadets for female companionship. The former is, of course, the time-honored complaint of soldiers about squad leaders and company commanders, and the latter, a rather conventional gripe of male college students at isolated campuses. They are, nonetheless, ammunition for Truscott in the rising crescendo of his anger at "the System."

Perhaps the most important of the author's staged obsessions is the West Point honor code. He describes how the murder victim once used the code to hound a fellow plebe out of the Academy. It is a grotesque caricature of the purpose of the code, but to Truscott, honor is not the end, but pusillanimity. The code is further used by General Hedges and his henchmen in their attempts to crucify Slaight; like everything admirable about West Point, it is totally inverted in this book, twisted to symbolize not honor, but the grossest venality.

In recent years the honor code has been modified at West Point, and women admitted to the Academy. These profound renovations of life at the Point are irrelevant to the author of *Dress Gray;* they would dilute the sensationalist impact of the book. To get around them, he sets the story back in the late sixties, at the old Academy, when graduating second lieutenants were shipped routinely to Vietnam, and the myth of modern knighthood was more plausible to the civilian world.

It always was a myth, as the graves of thousands of company grade officers at Arlington National Cemetery attest. Many of them died in Vietnam, not gloriously, but because they were ill-prepared by West Point and other officers' training posts—Army and Marine Corps alike—for the unique war they were sent to fight. Frontal assaults, vertical envelopments and perimeter defenses, as taught our Vietnam-era lieutenants, were often formulae for slaughter, not the fleeting masculine glory that Truscott would have us believe the West Point *ésprit* subsists on. He preaches, in his gossipy novel of 1978, that West Point's military ethos is a sham and a cruel joke. It seems a bit late for a USMA grad, who resigned his commission rather than risk getting close to combat, to try to teach us what went wrong in Vietnam.

He does not, he can hardly know himself. The pummeling Truscott administers to West Point is a melange of overblown ravings by his protagonist, Slaight, who is cast as fearless and independent, willing to take on the West Point establishment despite his so-so grades. One may smirk at the coincidence of names: Rysam Parker Slaight III, Lucian K. Truscott IV—for Truscott's sake, one hopes the similarity extends no further than this self-indulgent literary toy. For a reason never explained, Slaight, a mediocre student, finds in himself the ability to psychoanalyze the men who founded West Point, and everyone who has attended since. To him, they live as a cult of fear and dark compulsions.

We read, in unnecessary capital letters, about the brusque treatment plebes are subjected to when they enter "Beast Barracks" after swearing-in. The harassing commands of upperclassmen playing at drill sergeant might be unpleasant, but hardly worse than the initiation of Annapolis ensigns, Marine Corps officer candidates, or enlisted men, for that matter, in any branch of the service. Indeed, anyone who has ever served in the military in war or peace probably had it at least as tough as the cadets for whom Truscott requires our sympathy. The education of a West Point cadet is demanding. But it is not the orgy of raw savagery that *Dress Gray* advertises. But, as the propagandist's manual probably says, if the outrageous lie is repeated often enough, it comes to be accepted, or at least tolerated. Which, in turn, makes Truscott's attack on West Point an attack on values. The Academy becomes a factory producing bloodthirsty automatons; discipline, protocol, rationality, and not the least, honor—all these serve some unnamed, abominable ends; and staff officers at West Point are unworthy of respect, or even common courtesy.

This is perhaps why Truscott's tawdry novel has gained the attention it has. His pages-long tirades against the Point, the patently absurd dialogue, and the cheap plot are cast as evidence against the way of life at the Academy. His book has been called an "indict-

"Mr. Truscott wishes to use his novel to show us a military establishment deeply shaken and corrupted . . . [he] is always convincing . . ."
—*New York Times Book Review*

". . . he succeeds."
—*New York Times*

". . . a fascinating study . . ."
—*Publishers Weekly*

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ment" of the United States Military Academy. That, by hook or by crook, is what the author intended.

The one utterly amazing, or disturbing, thing about Truscott's book has been the response to it by the weighty journals. Even after he *says* he wrote it for the money and the dust cover *says* that "he writes fiction for a living," the most prestigious literary critics outdo each other in adoring it as a serious work—until we notice the paraphrase of the review by the *New York Post:* "Explosive sexuality," which is the level of tripe served up by the *National Enquirer* or *True Detective.* It's not that difficult to see through. The "explosive sexuality" of Truscott's book goes over like a tear gas grenade, noxious and persistent, but without the sensate sting.

But why the deadly seriousness of these reviews of an amateurish, nonserious book? Because, no doubt, the journals that heaped plaudits upon it sense the familiar odor of muckraking. They don't praise Truscott's eloquence or his skill at fashioning a sentence, but his "thriller," and his "compelling exploration"—in effect, his quite correct perception of what is acceptable to them. If Truscott had written to glamorize West Point, his book would have been sniffed at as "hawkish"—assuming he would have found a publisher. □

Hopelessness and Unanswered Questions

Diane Johnson: *Lying Low;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Joseph Schwartz

One of the better introductions to this book is provided by Diane Johnson herself in a recent issue of the *New York Review of Books.* The sixties was a time when:

> ". . . young people stoned on ideologies, anti-intellectual and sanctimonious, [were] strangely protected by their limited vocabularies of received phrases from any ability to question their own righteousness."

A study of the meaning and consequences of that cultural ambience is what this astute novel, set in the present, is about.

The uncluttered structure of the narrative is easily outlined. During four hot August days the apparently homely lives of three women in Orris, California, a small college town, are radically changed. Ouida, an illegal alien from Brazil "lying low" from immigration officials, is disillusioned. Theodora, the elderly ex-dancer, is dead. The protagonist, Marybeth Howe, is left to contemplate the wreckage of her life. All three are brilliantly sketched.

Ouida goes to class, gives a *fiesta,* and tries to decide if she should marry to make her status in the United States legal. Theodora superintends the boarding house in which they all live, goes to humanitarian community meetings, and plans a ballet therapy program for prisoners. Marybeth, living under an assumed name, goes to work, tries to avoid the past, and undergoes the agony of questioning her radical righteouness. Out of such things is violence made.

It is best to begin with Ouida. First, she brings the perspective of an outsider to the American scene. Her observation that Americans do not know how to be happy since it is in their nature to quarrel is a crucial insight into the confusions of both Marybeth and Theodora. Second, Ouida's sentimental religious perspective serves an essential ironic function. She hopes for a spiritual solution to the problems which modern man has lost the ability to solve; the cultish pamphlets she studies promise the dawn of a new age. America's problem is lack of faith; people have lost the habit of belief. The Good News, brought to her by door-to-door Gospelers, is that the answer to the problem of evil is Faith. That she is finally disillusioned is the author's comment on the failure of her primitive naiveté—perhaps on the failure of Faith itself. Yet, her faith serves as a counterpoint to the complete loss of faith in both Marybeth and Theodora. The reader is encouraged to see this constructive function of Ouida as paramount throughout most of the novel. Hence, her final appearance as a disillusioned person comes as an ironic surprise. The venerable literary convention of the triumph of the simple heart is harshly tested. Ouida, like the others, loses her ability to cope with circumstances. The promise of a new age is far away; experience in her lovingly adopted country leaves her with only a series of unanswered questions. Faith is a perishable blossom; she loses heart. "What do I care about the next life?"

Marybeth, "lying low" from the police, is the novel's center of consciousness. A sixties student activist involved in an Ohio bombing which unintentionally caused a death, she has been underground for six years.

> "I *did* think someone had to try and change the world, that people had to try! It was a natural mistake. A lot of people thought that way. The war . . ."

Central to the novel is her questioning of her own righteousness. Deceived by her commitment to violent solutions, she has no longer any category in which

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to place herself. Sometimes she says her name aloud to be sure she exists. Emptied of meaning, each day lives her. Unable to accept her childhood faith or to believe in her past radical enthusiasms, she feels only the luxurious memory of having had beliefs and regret for her lost "condition of simple faith." The litanous recital of her radical credo has no more meaning than a magic rhyme.

> "I did what I thought was right. If some people had not taken risks, all the war and killing would have gone on. . . . You have to act on your beliefs. What good are beliefs if they have no consequences? . . . I will abide by the consequences of my beliefs."

But, and it is sad irony, she can barely remember what those beliefs were; ". . . she didn't believe anything any more."

Meeting Chuck Sweet, a figure from her early past, seems to hold out some hope in the form of sex for her. As his name suggests, he is too good to be true: "A youth of heavenly beauty," Eagle Scout, quarterback, altar boy, class president. He proves finally not to be her mode of re-entry into an ambiguous world from which she has withdrawn. He did not wish "to listen to her just now."

Until tested by Theodora's pathetically ironic death, only two things, strangely contradictory, remain important to Marybeth. First, she insists that she is really not sorry for the murder.

> "I'm not sorry. I'm not really sorry. When I'm old like Theo, I'll look back and have that. I think everyone who made napalm should have been blown up."

On the other hand, she could have warned the victim by phone, chose not to, and must now pay for that moment of knowledge with guilt that is deeply important to her. "Maybe it's even the best thing about me." For her crime to mean anything, she insists that she must go to prison for it.

Enter Theodora. An elderly person who has been "lying low" psychically, Theo comes to life and enacts, in a bungled way, what she admires in the young Marybeth; but Marybeth has already abandoned the clichés Theo embraces. Her discovery that Marybeth has taken action, been a bomber, makes her seem heroic to Theo. Marybeth observes a curious ironic mirror image of herself—an old woman without the excuse of youth stoned on ideologies, anti-intellectual and sanctimonious, embracing violent solutions without question. How the ironic contrast is managed is one of the most successful techniques in the novel.

Theo is irreverently characterized by Marybeth as a naive old liberal. One incident tells it all. Theo weeps over the death of a chicken since, she feels, there is a "cosmic necessity" to cry for creatures who have no one else to cry for them. People, however, who kill lakes and trees or build freeways, or whatever, she insists, should be bombed. She is determined to save people from themselves because wickedness, as she defines it, cannot be tolerated. Her unspoken sense of her own superiority is clear. The naive old liberal, as is customary, cannot deal with the necessary ambiguity of reality. Believing instead in the "richness of the inner life," she plans a ballet therapy program for prisoners, "Freedom Through Movement," completely unaware of the irony of the name and completely unsuspecting of the irony of action that awaits her when she visits the prison. All those charities and good works, Marybeth reflects, but Theo doesn't lift a finger to help Ouida, a third-world person in her own household, patronizingly leaving piety and the housework to her. Having no faith because "Nobody our age believes in God any more," she has causes. The FBI should stop seeking "silly college girls" who blow up people and go after "really wicked people." Her brother describes her aptly as a person who pays reality no regard. Having no philosophy, she values recklessness—the attractiveness of violent solutions. No line describes her better than this self-reflection: "My life has had an academic cast, no temperament for performance, never had an abortion, never placed a bomb." A revealing measure for judging one's life.

The climax of her "academic" life is the ballet therapy program. Arriving at the prison, she discovers herself a front for the delivery of homemade explosives to assist the prisoners in their escape. An unintended hostage, Theo even now casts herself in the role of heroine, wishing herself their leader. Just before the tear-gas bullet detonates the explosives in the escape van, she confirms her fatal attraction to violent solutions. Innocence and justice are fairy tales; the only solution to the world's ambiguity is violence. Her silly rhetoric is turned against her, and she is bombed, the mistaken victim of a plan aimed at a quite different end. Her inability to question her righteous superiority is a penetrating comment on Marybeth's past. Because their experiences overcome the barrier of age, they are joined in the righteous mentality which sanctimoniously endorses bombing—except this time Marybeth knows the victim. Experience has come full circle, instructing those who will have no other teacher. Whether it instructs Marybeth is an open question. Is she still not sorry for her own murdering? Is guilt important only because it gives dignity to an otherwise thoughtless and irresponsible act? It is difficult to say.

I am puzzled as well concerning Miss Johnson's attitude toward the value of such instruction. The tale is clear in the point it makes; the attitude of the teller is problematical. What is clear in the tale is the habitual failure of the liberal mentality, which is always rigid, dogmatic, and uncompromising in *existential* matters. It cannot tolerate the unavoidable ambiguity of experience,

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insisting on forcing humanistic paradigms of conduct on the experience of life. In other words, values can be defined through politics. On the other hand, the liberal mentality, fearful and contemptuous of any dogma transcending the individual's capacity for invention, denies the fact of law in the *essential* realm. Thus, values cannot be defined through religion, the sacred—the transcendent. Errors with respect to the order of essence and existence are, by definition, deadly.

The attitude of the teller seems to be revealed in the final posture of Marybeth. While Theo dies confirmed in her violent faith, it is clear that Marybeth is profoundly shaken by her death. Brought up to believe in everything, "this country, abstractions, in God, even," Marybeth discovers that the truth never wins. Nothing she would ever do would make any difference. Theo's death confirms her sense of hopelessness. There never was anything anyone could do, "I mean ever, anytime . . . I mean from the first." What most terrifies and confuses her is the discovery that she is not extraordinary, but like everyone else. Another liberal dogma found wanting: people must have their thinking done for them by superior beings.

Faith (Ouida) and good works (bombing those who *deserve* it and self-fulfillment therapy) are both finally ineffectual against the confusing ambiguity of reality. There is, unfortunately for me, no character in the novel who might be an objective correlative for any other way of looking at reality. Ouida and Theo act out the two aspects of Marybeth's experience. Ouida stands for Marybeth's juvenile faith, her final disappointment echoing Marybeth's discovery that faith is pointless. Theo is a resonating image of Marybeth's radical period, her death confirming Marybeth's realization that being stoned on radical ideologies leads to disaster. Being given such choices, of course, leaves her with no options when their bankruptcy becomes evident. Perhaps her commitment to secular happiness as the ruling image of life is at the core of her problem. Her jejune definition—"enough to eat, and freedom, and equal opportunity" — simply does not stand up under the assault of experience. It leaves essential questions unconsidered, and without considering much less answering such questions existential matters are inevitably terrifying. In such cases, Sartre was right: we are doomed to be free.

Fortunate readers may perceive the meaning of this cautionary tale in a different light without doing an injustice to Diane Johnson's evident skills in invention and arrangement. I would encourage them to do so. As a starting point, I offer F. Scott Fitzgerald's observation in *The Crack-Up:*

> ". . . the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise." □

The Return of the Useful Idiots

Joan Colebrook: *Innocents of the West: Travels Through the Sixties;* Basic Books; New York.

by Alan J. Levine

During the era between the World Wars Joseph Stalin privately referred to his Western dupes and fellow-travelers as "useful idiots." He made use of these people principally through front organizations that insiders ironically referred to as "innocents clubs." The decade and a half following World War II was a trying time for the useful idiots and the innocents clubs in the surviving free countries; but though decimated, they survived and eventually experienced a revival. Joan Colebrook, an Australian writer, has published a fascinating impressionistic journal of the years 1964-1969. She chronicles the rise of a new generation of useful idiots, and other unpleasant events and phenomena that accompanied it: anti-Western fanaticism in the ex-colonial world, the leftward drift of the Western political spectrum and the "signs of rot and decay which begin to break down the ancient disciplines upon which were built the Anglo-Saxon civilizations"—rising crime and the drug epidemic.

The contemporary "innocents"—Colebrook's preferred term—are not, of course, identical with their predecessors. The discipline and centralized loyalty evoked by Stalinism have been notably absent. As a model "progressive" society the USSR was largely replaced by China and Cuba. To be sure, as Colebrook observes, the resurgent extreme left was influenced by the "fumes of memory"; many activists were the offspring of Communist parents. On the other hand, the ability of these people to gain some influence depended largely on ignorance of recent historical events. As a college professor told Colebrook in 1964: "The present generation was not hostile to Communism; it knew little about the stealing of United States nuclear secrets in the forties, or about the aggression involved in the Korean War or even about the taking over of Eastern Europe." She writes: "Time has changed the world political situation but has not made Americans more astute. A whole new generation of the easily deceived has been bred in the incubators of the country where the

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worker has the highest standard of living yet experienced in the globe. Affluence and contentment seem to have paralyzed its survival sense." A general mood of "antiestablishmentarianism," oceans of vague rhetoric about liberation and neo-Marxist ideology submerged parts of the American academic community. Few had the nerve to ask, as one teacher at Columbia did, "Liberation? Liberation from *what?*" An overemphasis on the end of the wave of violent disruption that occurred on a relatively few campuses between 1968-1970 should not obscure the fact that many of the attitudes engendered in the late '60s have not disappeared; in fact they have percolated into American culture as a whole, in a diluted form. *Innocents of the West* is of considerable interest to anyone reviewing the development of this situation.

Commenting on the first anniversary of President Kennedy's assassination, Miss Colebrook recognized it as "that event from which seems to date a certain American failure of nerve." So it proved to be, though for psychological reasons rather than objective ones. The intensification of the Vietnam War and its rise as a hyperemotional political issue paved the way for the radicalization of the intellectual atmosphere. As Colebrook wrote in 1967, "the attempt to publicize America's bungling effort in Vietnam as hideously malevolent is of definitive importance because it shapes the emotions of citizens here who will decide whether or not the Communists are to be given their way." But the effects of this sort of campaign were not limited to influencing the outcome of the Indochina war.

Though *ignorance* was an essential factor in the development of the destructive attitudes Colebrook describes, one may doubt that it is really an expression of "innocence," or, as she describes it on one occasion, as a "refusal to fear." Elsewhere, she suggests that "perhaps it is a compliment to the West to say that its open societies have managed to produce citizens hopelessly inexperienced in certain kinds of political evil." But stupidity and an inability to learn from experience are not adornments at all. Also, as Miss Colebrook herself sometimes perceives, there was a real element of perversity in the outlook of these "innocents"; a hatred of one's own society and civilization (not just "capitalism") and obscure guilt feelings, often expressed as an inverted racism. She quotes one radical's claim that "Ninety percent of those going into Chinese studies are basically alienated from Western culture . . . any value system looks more appealing than your own . . ." and I. F. Stone's claim that white Americans were secretly pleased by Martin Luther King's murder. Perhaps the classic anecdote of this mentality was reported by Diana Trilling: when she asked a student if she knew much about the Spanish Civil War, she was told "No, but I know enough to know that it was our fault!"

Miss Colebrook's reflections on the political radicalization of part of the "lumpenproletariat" and the American black population are of more mixed value. Her journal does provide a useful reminder of the frightening racial tension and urban riots of 1965-1968, an aspect of the 1960s which seems to have been quite forgotten by many commentators on the events of those years, though at the time it probably caused more anxiety than the Indochina war. But her account brings back the exaggerated fears they evoked. The riots and the growth of black nationalist sentiment were indeed disturbing, particularly since they came after unprecedented progress for blacks. But it is now clear, and should have been clear at the time, that these things did not reflect the attitudes of the vast majority of blacks. They were not organized, as Miss Colebrook seems to think, nor do they seem to have been significantly stimulated by political fanatics like Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown.

Another fear of the '60s which also has not been confirmed by the passage of time was that the Chinese Communists, playing the racist theme, would unite Asia and Africa against the West, with Cuba perhaps playing a similar role in Latin America. But the so-called "third world" is not such a revolutionary tinderbox as is often supposed. Both China and Cuba managed to cause trouble in their respective spheres, but both made a mess of their internal affairs. Cuba now plays a very different aggressive role, as a Soviet pawn, while the Soviets have pushed China out of any significant role in the affairs of other Communist Parties and put her on the defensive in a war of nerves. African hatred of the "white-redoubt" in southern Africa is being manipulated by the Soviets, not the Chinese.

Needless to say, there is no cause for satisfaction in our present situation. In her epilogue, Miss Colebrook eloquently discusses the end results of the "disintegrations of the '60s" as seen from 1979. A general "yielding" to Communist power by the Western countries has taken place. Within the West, though the sectarian left has disintegrated in most countries, opinion has sharply polarized, and terrorism is rampant in some countries. "The social fabric has been weakened and frayed." "The cult of drugs had spread. Normal defense mechanisms were put to sleep." Meanwhile, "our spokesmen seem curiously tentative." They are apt to emit what she generously describes as "unsuitable statements," e.g. President Ford's amazing discovery that the Soviet Union does not control Eastern Europe, and Andrew Young's hypothesis that the Cubans are "stabilizing" Angola. Joan Colebrook's journal tells a bleak tale of a period of folly and defeat—a period in which we are still living. □

Persuasion At Work—Vol. II, No. 9, September 1979:

"LEGALIZED GAMBLING—A FOOLISH BET"

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Spiritual Awareness in the Prairies

Ruth Beebe Hill: *Hanta Yo;* Doubleday & Co.; Garden City, New York.

by Maxine Steinman

Hanta Yo is a saga about a band of Dakotah (Sioux) Indians, and an evocation of their way of life in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, before the white man took possession of the American plains. As a work of fiction, the book has faults. It is too long (812 pages), too detailed, and without real drama. The characters are predictable types and archetypes, and the narrative, for all its seriousness, even sobriety, is only occasionally moving and very rarely surprising. Yet *Hanta Yo* is well worth looking into, both for what it does and what it aims to do, and for the questions it raises about freedom and survival.

There are two introductions. One, by the author, Ruth Beebe Hill, who spent many years investigating the life of the Plains Indians; and one by Chunksa Yuha, a Santee Sioux who instructed her in Sioux rituals and songs and helped her translate her book from English into the Dakotah dialect. From there, it was retranslated back into English, or, if you will, into an English version of the Indian language. The purpose of all this was to set things in a proper perspective, to ensure that the appearances, the facts and artifacts, of Indian life were portrayed within the context of Sioux values and aspirations. Or—in the words of author and collaborator—to tell the story from the viewpoint of Indian philosophy and present a work that was "Dakotah" in essence, rather than something invented or put together by outsiders.

Descriptions of the American Indian of times past often emphasize his commitment to individualism, his belief that freedom of choice was essential to his development as a whole person. One writer, Dale Van Every (in *Forth to the Wilderness*) has noted that the Indian, to become a man in the Indian sense of the term, had to become "more and more of an individualist. He must reject all discipline imposed by others while at suitable intervals he must most rigorously discipline himself in order to develop his skill, hardihood and courage as hunter and warrior. Even his vices, including drunkenness, his saddest, were but further expressions of his innate freedom of choice . . ."

Hanta Yo provides a portrait of the ideal individualist in the story of the Teton Sioux, Ahbleza, whose experiences, feats and spiritual growth as he progresses from childhood into manhood form the core of the book. A hero in the Dakotah mold, Ahbleza is a brave and accomplished warrior; yet he is a warrior who finds battle less than fulfilling, who prefers the role of peacemaker, and who rejects the concept of revenge. He is, also, a loner who will not compromise his own vision of things to impress or please others; he recognizes no authority but himself. And finally, he is a leader who observes to the fullest the integrity of others; thus, he will not presume to make decisions for his people, although he does choose to die for them. His quest is to get to the "heart of things," to choose his way, to "own the earth"—in brief, to come to his full powers. In the cry, *Hanta yo, hanta yo, wakanya hibu welo* —which means, "Clear the way, clear the way, in a sacred manner I come"—he expresses these powers and his perception of the oneness of all power—his apprehension of essential truth.

Legends, it may be argued, are a form of wish fulfillment, an expression of how a people would like to think they once were in some noble past, or of how they might have become had they reached their full potential. In the story of Ahbleza, *Hanta Yo* implies that the warrior society was only a transitional phase of Indian existence—that spiritual awareness, not fighting prowess, was the true aim of Indian life. The legend also suggests that the commitment to individualism was not, despite what some observers may have supposed, a commitment to self-indulgence, lack of discipline or irresponsibility to the group. Nor was a person to be admired merely for doing what he felt like doing, especially if his acts involved cruelty, foolishness or deception.

A large part of *Hanta Yo,* and by no means the least interesting part, has to do with the day-to-day life of the Indians, their customs and ceremonies, the role of families and women, the general social and political organization. The portrait that emerges is in many ways an appealing one—we get a glimpse of relative orderliness without regimentation, of professionalism at its best (scouts, warriors and hunters had to know their business well to survive), of young people who are watched, trained and encouraged to be independent. We see a society that understands its own purposes—this in contrast to our own world, where so much that happens seems to make no sense.

Although *Hanta Yo* describes some of the more savage practices of the Dakotahs, the true savages (and painted very clearly as such) are the white traders who, bringing disease and alcohol, ominously appear on the scene. One of Ahbleza's last acts is to lead some of his people away from the vicinity of the trading posts. However, before he dies, he leaves a message to the effect that the Indians should not view all white men as bad. Given the emotional underpinnings of the saga, this sentiment, though admirable, is somewhat less than convincing.

As a free man the Indian could

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choose to drink or not, to trade with the white man or not, to unite with other Indians against the white intruder or not. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that these "choices" ultimately determined what ensued. Time, as well as the white invasion, conspired against the Indian's way of life, and doomed it. Regret over its disappearance understandably permeates the pages of *Hanta Yo.* □

Drucker's Gallery of Portraits

Peter F. Drucker: *Adventures of a Bystander;* Harper & Row; New York.

By David Pietrusza

Peter Drucker, that trenchant analyst of management, economics, and society itself, has here written a memoir that is not really an autobiography, for it is not really *about* him. On the surface it concerns a series of rather remarkable people that Drucker came upon in the course of his now four-score and ten years. While the work *is* fascinating on the level of chatty portraiture, it is, in fact, much more, for within each glimpse into these noteworthy personae, Drucker proposes some insight and wraps up some moral.

But of course the common thread is Drucker. Born in Imperial Vienna to a family of cultured and educated civil servants, he saw the Hapsburg Empire collapse and a tiny Austrian Republic replace it only to be swallowed up by the Nazi *Anschluss.* But even before that he had left his homeland—to Weimar Germany, where he worked as a journalist and as a professor, then to Depression-era London as an investment counselor. And finally to America in the 1930s—an impoverished but innocently optimistic land. Here, he prospered as a professor at Middlebury College, as a pioneer student of the science of management and as the author of economic best sellers.

In the course of this migration he came across such well-known personalities as Sigmund Freud, John L. Lewis, Alfred P. Sloan, Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan, and Henry Luce. Yet there are others: his grandmother; Austrian Finance Minister Herman Schwarzwald and his pioneer-feminist wife Genia; the multitalented Polanyi family; Count Max Traun-Trauneck, a patrician socialist, and Fritz Kraemer, the Prussian monarchist who later became a Pentagon adviser—and who in 1945 "discovered" young Henry Kissinger.

The chapter on Freud is particularly interesting. It is not really based on personal remembrances but on a withering analysis of the myths of the Freud persona: "that all his life Freud lived with serious financial worries and in near-poverty; that he suffered greatly from anti-Semitism and was denied full recognition and the university appointments that were his due, because he was a Jew; and that the Vienna of his day, especially medical Vienna, ignored and neglected Freud."

According to Drucker, Freud never knew poverty, he always maintained a lucrative practice, and, until Nazism forced him into exile, knew no real anti-Semitism. In fact, academic honors and notice came early to Freud. "No one was discussed as much, or argued about more," notes Drucker. "Medical Vienna did not ignore or neglect Freud, it *rejected* him. It rejected him as a person because it held him to be in gross violation of the ethics of the healer. And it rejected his theory as a glittering half-truth, and as poetry rather than medical science or therapy."

Freud ignored all charity cases. He held that psychotherapy would be valid only if the patient *paid* for it and if the doctor was emotionally detached from him—practices that Drucker describes as "degrading the physician from healer to mechanic." And beyond even this mercenary approach was the question of the very efficacy of psychotherapy, a new science that reminded many of quackery with "one universal psychological dynamism for every emotional disorder." Freud, himself, often stonewalled critics, even on such a basic question of the remission rate for neurosis versus the cure rate for psychoanalysis.

Compounding the confusion was the very ambiguity of the new science. What was it trying to be? Medicine or cultural criticism? "Psychoanalysis is the greatest contribution to the art of the novel," said an admiring Thomas Mann, but what this had to do with traditional healing baffled many.

Freud himself rationalized away many of the doubting questions and projected hostilities onto others that he himself held. "The Freud of the Freudian realities is a much more interesting man, I submit," says Drucker, "than the Freud of the conventional myth."

While Freud is a household word, Noel Brailsford is not. In the twenties he was an influential British journalist; at his death in 1958 he was largely forgotten. A militant atheist, a vegetarian and a socialist, he campaigned for Indian independence, opposed World War I and, despite some lingering doubts, began to eulogize the Soviet Union. His motive was the creation of a "Popular Front" against Nazism, yet as the horrors of the purge trials mounted he eventually came to break with the Reds. The Communists and their supporters then turned on him with full fury. He was blacklisted and labeled a "fascist," a "traitor," a "warmonger." Even after he offered a truce to the Soviets after the Nazi invasion of the socialist motherland, he was vilified.

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Drucker's verdict is harsh—and justly so, for Brailsford, who prided himself as the conscience of the British progressive movement, had compromised himself with his "pragmatic" praise of Stalinism. Brailsford, concluded Drucker, "tried to accommodate conscience to power for the sake of effectiveness. He ceased to matter."

There is in Drucker's narratives a marvelous humanity, an eye and ear for the significant, the humorous and the fascinating. Above all there is the clean, lucid prose that so often escapes native American learned writers. □

Commendables

Regnery's Remembrance of Things Past and Present

Henry Regnery: ***Memoirs of a Dissident Publisher;*** Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York.

What kind of publisher is one who seems to have read everything he has published, can come up with an errorless summary of the most philosophical among these works, dissect their contents and messages with the erudition and incisiveness of a scholar, and write spirited profiles of their authors with charm and warmth? We've heard about such publishers who once existed in Georgian London, Balzac's Paris and Franz Josef's Vienna. They were prosperous, famous, venerated, regarded as national treasures. Their only contemporary American counterpart, to our knowledge, is far from receiving such honors and boons.

However, few of those who know the present American cultural scene would argue with the assertion that Henry Regnery is exactly such a publisher. Those who may feel some doubts have only to read his memoirs to agree, provided their decency could overcome their ideological hostility. And those who happen to know Mr. Regnery know also that he possesses the gift for making people enjoy his very presence.

To all evidence, Henry Regnery originally planned to write only memoirs, but he has wound up with that rare memorialist's achievement: making vast landscapes of history palpable, understandable and lucid. From *Memoirs* emerges an American conservative's version of the public affairs of his lifetime as seen through the books he helped to infuse into the cultural mainstream. Mr. Regnery himself comes to life in these pages as a soft-spoken, reasonable and sentimental man—sentimental in the sense of having distinct and profound sentiments about his meaning of truth, wisdom and justice. He may occasionally be carried away by his feelings, but he never lets them encroach, abuse or even tinker with his noble civil instincts and personal integrity. To him, a conservative is someone who is "able to view the present in the long perspective of history . . . [to see] the present not as the end product or purpose of history—which I think is a typically liberal fallacy—but as a link connecting a long past with a limitless future . . ." We can't recall a more trustworthy ideological credo.

For anyone interested in what nonliberal America has to offer, this book is a must. Mr. Regnery's conservative reverence for human dignity makes one hopeful and optimistic about our resources. (CC) □

Jaffa's Timely Reminder

Harry V. Jaffa: ***How to Think About the American Revolution: A Bicentennial Celebration;*** Carolina Academic Press; Durham, North Carolina.

Professor Jaffa has written a fervent and inspiring interpretation of the American Revolution and its place in political philosophy. Countering the arguments of Willmoore Kendall and others that Abraham Lincoln, and subsequent Americans, attributed too much

Books in the Mail

Lithuania: The European Adam by Joseph Ehret; Kestutis Jerome Butkus Foundation; Chicago. On the richness of the Lithuanian language, the history of the other Baltic nations and their fate under Soviet occupation.

The Last Great Nation on Earth by Rose L. Martin; Fidelis Publishers, Inc.; Wake Village, Texas. A warning for America about the current trend toward socialism.

The Spirit in the Church by Karl Rahner; Seabury Press; New York. An account of experiences of spirituality, charismatic groups and prophecies.

Fundamentals of Economics by Svetozar Pejovich; The Fisher Institute; Dallas. An incorporation of the new theory of property rights into the basic economic analysis.

Self-Destruct: Dismantling America's Internal Security by Robert Morris; Arlington House; New Rochelle, New York. An overview of the threat techniques and successes of communism in undermining U.S. security.

Man Is Moral Choice by Albert H. Hobbs; Arlington House; New Rochelle, New York. An affirmation of the existence and practical necessity of moral choice in man.

Billy Graham: Performer? Politician? Preacher? Prophet? compiled and published by the Church League of America; Wheaton, Illinois. Billy Graham, his organization, his finances and his changes over the years through excerpts from the public record.

The Ideal World of Economics: The Conservative Economic World View, The Liberal Economic World View, The Radical Economic World View by Benjamin Ward; Basic Books, Inc.; New York. A summary of conservative, liberal and radical economic thought and their impact on the world today.

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importance to the Declaration of Independence and its statement of equality, Jaffa reaffirms the central place of the Declaration and of equality in the American political tradition.

Jaffa shows that there is no ideological separation between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution: the former is vital to the interpretation of the latter and was so regarded by the founders. Contrary to the assertions of an ironic alliance of Confederate apologists and the extreme left, the avowal of rights was intended to be universal and unlimited, not just for white Americans. Jaffa reminds us that equality, to the founding fathers as to Lincoln, meant equality of rights under the law, the equal right of all to be treated justly, and not identical conditions and rewards. Moreover, he argues, political liberty, the rights of property, and even ordinary morality, are derived from the ultimate value of equality.

It is not easy to agree with Jaffa's arguments that the American Revolution was a radical social upheaval comparable to the French Revolution, and that the Civil War was but a long-delayed second act of the Revolution, but these theses do not detract from a very impressive book. (AJL) □

Tyrrell's 'Here Come de Judge'

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.: ***Public Nuisances;*** Basic Books; New York.

It certainly looks as if Pigmeat Markham's famous riff "Here come de judge . . ." was a fair and accurate announcement of Tyrrell's book. Pigmeat's swinging jive conveyed exactly the feeling about the moral judgments with which Tyrrell, a different kind of artist, beautifully fills his volume. Tyrrell, America's middle-aged hope for the awakening of reason, judges by condemning—the most time-honored jurisprudence of the powerless—he dooms by insults, he sentences the guilty to be sneered at. Those upon whom his merciless verdict falls rarely even know that they have been dragged before a court. But Tyrrell challenges the liberal establishment which is so mighty at the moment that all the judge can do to uphold sociomental law and order is to give a raspberry to the accused.

And it works—to some extent. Amid stylistic jitterbugging, Tyrrell's cutting image of liberal eminentos succeeds in bringing to light what's most irrefutable in the abjectness of all the Galbraiths, Hellmans, Abzugs, Vidals, Dylans and Flynts. But those are the most shameless profiteers of the liberal slavery imposed upon the American mind; their sordidness is merely slapstick. Others under Tyrrell's scalpel look as if they have been anesthetized with a club and operated on with a cleaver. Tyrrell has a talent for abusive neologism, he effectively employs linguistic compounds, tosses nouns and verbs into an opulent salad in which one occasionally finds some suspicious-looking ingredients; his adjectives are more stinging than penetrating. He has an instinct for semantic merriment and grasps what can be extracted from the shadiness of a word. He deftly conceptualizes his vignettes, but because he relies more on invective than innuendo, he often bludgeons rather than kills neatly. Name-calling is a risky business, as every 8-year-old knows.

Many compare Tyrrell to Mencken; he loves it and seems to consider it precise. We think such a comparison does Tyrrell a disservice. Mencken was the generator of a high-powered intellectual petulance which hit base with such force that it left an enduring cultural legacy. Tyrrell is all gaiety and cheerfulness, his forte is sophomoric cognition, epistemology and vehemence all rolled into one—a literary value in itself. The embattled camp of antiliberal sanity needs this kind of cultural energizer today, just as it could use some Menckenian malice—but they are not the same. Tyrrell is Tyrrell, we appreciate him as he is and we must do all we can to protect him from becoming the Don Rickles of conservative journalism—which he is dangerously prone to inflicting upon himself. (CC) □

Jenkins' Discovery

Peter Jenkins: ***A Walk Across America;*** William Morrow & Co.; New York.

Before Peter Jenkins began his walk, he was a sheltered suburbanite of the '60s—he had "done" the whole scene: drugs, pot, college, shacking up, marriage, divorce. Woodstock was the supreme event of his life. Totally disenchanted with America and everything it stood for, he was ready to leave—for anywhere. A chance encounter made him decide to "give America one more chance." He concluded that crossing this land on foot would make his mind clearer.

In fact, it did. From upstate New York to the Gulf coast he walked, and his previous thoughts and beliefs were shattered along the way. Ordinary, even banal, phenomena became, for him, dazzling revelations. Small wonder, as Mr. Jenkins' perceptions were formed during the rampant obscurantism of the '60s—perhaps the kinkiest bigotry in the history of the American mind.

He found police officers who refused to look like pigs and were generous and concerned. He lived for a time with a black family who believed in God. He realized the idiocy of his rabid vegetarianism. He shared communal life at The Farm and found it wanting. He talked with George Wallace and found him congenial. He was threatened by a drunken "redneck" farmer—who came back in the morning, sober, to apologize and wish him well. On his way to a party in New Orleans he strayed instead to a revival meeting and found God. In a religious seminary he found his future

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wife. The Peter Jenkins in New Orleans is very different from the Peter Jenkins of Alfred, New York—he grew up along the way. He survived a bitter Appalachian winter and buried his "forever friend" Cooper-Half-Malamute.

Now, it is up to the burnt-out children of the '60s and '70s, Jenkins' erstwhile comrades-in-arms, whether or not this book will fulfill its mission. (BK) □

Waste of Money

Didion's Number

Joan Didion: ***The White Album;*** Simon & Schuster; New York.

She is often called "a libertarian" or "individualistic Westerner" by befuddled critics, and is credited with restrained conservative sympathies. Some of her views on society and culture might possibly justify this reputation. Her cool and sensible assessment of existential traps, feminism or international chaos could lend her some serious credentials. But these are only ornaments on a façade. Behind it are intellectual infrastructures of cheap plywood.

A new breed of writer has become prominent during the last 15 years. They enrich neither culture nor us. They act as vibrators. Joan Didion and David Halberstam, from different perimeters of creativity, are the best specimens of the breed. They emit quasi-intellectual and pseudoemotional frequencies which bring their professional buddies in Manhattan and Beverly Hills into blissful adulation, which is easily packaged later into the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* critical quickies, studded with meaningless superlatives. John Leonard, the classic New York literary dildo, once compared Didion to T. S. Eliot. Such hype makes it extremely unfashionable to notice the plastic quality of Didion's "anxieties" or Halberstam's "concerns"; their "fragility" or "robustness" becomes an instant product. And they sell. The intellectualoids feel obliged to buy, and best-selling authors are fabricated. They get shrilly publicized in the heartland where sober English department professors ask themselves whether all this is for real, and why something as "natural" as a rubber sex aid should be acclaimed as introspection and sensitivity. They should be impressed, though: they are facing a woman who has turned her vacuousness into a literary personality.

If we are already submerged in what Professor Lasch calls the culture of narcissism—and are drowning slowly, splashing playfully in the cultural mud—books like those of Ms. Didion are part of our swampy disintegration. The much-vaunted subtlety of her vision, analysis and inferences is none other than the postidealistic mist of *art nouveaux* Europe, dismissed after World War I as shoddy rather than sinister. Ms. Didion always wades in the same boring neuroses; every boil on her mind is equated with an existential catastrophe, and the discomforting mucus in her conscience ascends to the status of perdition. We should not forget that her career was founded on a novel whose cognitive and moral focus was a female moron. Moron as the center of modern sensitivities resulted in imbecility as the best metaphor for beauty and integrity, a measure of reality. The fact that that made her a celebrated novelist proves somehow that she was perceptive, and that her success is not just the outcome of blind coincidence. According to the *New York Times Book Review,* she possesses a "highly vulnerable sense of herself." We doubt it. Anyone who knows how to market one's own vulnerability is actually pushing some pretty sturdy merchandise; it only looks frail—just like a McDonald's hamburger doesn't *look* greasy on a television commercial. This is why even the dictum "the queen is naked" seems improper in this instance. It may suggest a bit of undeserved flattery. (CC) □

Wills' Number

Garry Wills: ***Confessions of a Conservative;*** Doubleday & Co.; New York.

Brilliance, insights, style, affectionate augustinianism, Jeffersonian expertise—that's one side of Mr. Wills and his book.

Another?

What do we call it when someone uses a shield emblazoned with a distinct motto to defend ideas and persons directly opposed to what that motto promises? Philosophical incoherence? Ideological conmanship? Ebullient imposture?

We would settle for an unsavory lack of dignity—a not-infrequent feature among talented erudites. "Dignity," P. G. Wodehouse once wrote, "is a sensitive plant which flourishes only under the fairest conditions." Mr. Wills hasn't had it easy in life: it is sufficient to say that he wishes to flourish in the inclement soil of left-liberal periodicals. Something has to be sacrificed, so dignity goes overboard. Mr. Wills proclaims himself a conservative and is out to shield (with this alleged allegiance) Soviet crimes and Lillian Hellman from our revulsion.

The left is an inveterate snob everywhere and clever apostasy was always bound for a career in its pastures. On this recognition, Stalin organized his nefarious "Peace Movement," studded with senile English theologians and Calabrian princes who, for a modest salary, lent the communist circus a reactionary but properly redeemed splendor. The *New York Review of Books* gives its franchise for anticommunism only to former Stalinists and Trotskyites. Those who never served Baal, like Solzhenitsyn, are not anticommunists *comme il faut.* However, anyone who accepts Che Guevara as a freedom fighter will have no trouble in accepting Mr. Wills as a conservative. The *New York Times,* for example, accepts him as such with gusto. By in-

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sisting on his conservative instincts and underwriting, in broad strokes, every liberal sentiment, Mr. Wills can rest assured that his presence will be duly noticed as much as an authentic conservative statement is ignored. □

Screen

Let's Get Romance

***Manhattan;* Directed by Woody Allen; Written by Woody Allen and Marshall Brickman; United Artists.**

***Same Time, Next Year;* Directed by Robert Mulligan; Written by Bernard Slade; Universal.**

by Eric Shapearo

Suddenly, there's an outcry among the hacks who daily squeeze their minds for a drop of opinion. After more than a decade of measuring art by the secretions oozing from screens brimming with the flaccid buttocks and bosoms of so-called stars, the clamor is for romance. Who gave the order and why is unclear, but the horde of prefabricated arbiters, those who dream about getting room for their names on theatre marquees, forthwith yell for romance. No one specifies the word, but bonuses and first-nights-cum-caviar are at stake —certainly more serious things than critical inquiry and decorum.

But how do we retrieve romance?

We all know one can't have it, à la Garbo and Gilbert, or even *My Funny Valentine,* without a bit of mendacity. Beauty is not necessarily truth, although it is not necessarily a lie. The cinematic warmth of the '20s and the schmaltz of the '50s were always framed by convention, as if contained in a casserole which prevented them from evaporating, or from smearing all over. Both warmth and schmaltz preconditioned the palatability of the dish. The '60s went after the unvarnished and preordained truth according to shallow and flashy ideological gospels. The result was cultural vulgarization on a scale unknown before. During the '70s even worse things happened. Ezra Pound perceived the end of Western civilization in ". . . the loss of *all* distinction between public and private affairs." We are dismally close to it. The universal nausea and individual malaise are slowly expanding everywhere. And now the critics, who bear the chief responsibility for this situation, are grumbling that unvarnished truth is unglamorous, and demand that romance be woven from *Deep Throat's* aesthetics and etiquette.

Thus, once again, everything boils down to existential attitudes and forms of morality—and with respect to that, *Manhattan* is a boring movie about unsavory, rather insipid, if not quite repulsive people. Why a homely, to say the least, and certainly uncharming even if, on occasion, pathetically affable New Yorker has it so easy with women can be best explained by their stunted exigencies and devalued sense of themselves.

In fact, with the exception of a 17-year-old girl, the protagonist's love partners are meretricious, not too well-scrubbed and pompously obnoxious. And dull. Feelings among this set are articulated through twaddle and do not translate into acts. This leaves us constantly uncertain about what is meant as compassion and what is intended to be satire. The filter of moral reasoning is never activated by narration or events: we are supposed to suppose that it is somewhere in the meager plot—but where? This is an author's movie, which means, in hip critical parlance, that the textures and significance of the conceived reality come to us exclusively through the author's brokerage—neither the characters nor the situations may have a life of their own. And the author speaks about Gotham's *jeunesse* (quite advanced) *dorée* with apathy: the New Class of his vision performs the rites of privilege and good life in the void between Elaine's and Bloomingdale's. The author refuses even to try to judge anybody or anything; it's his good right and it's nothing new in drama. However, he continuously informs us about his sensitivity and brittleness. It's not exactly a Stendhalian quandary, and there's plenty of toying with the idea that his adolescent lover may help: his vulnerability interacts with some messages she emits, she offers him psychotherapy through authenticity of emotions and loyalties which are absent from his world of intellectual zombies. For some reason, her somewhat cynical puberty is refreshing and reliable among people who earn big money for cultivating torpor and platitudes and writing books and film scripts about them. They know that it is so, Allen himself refers to them (or himself?) as the "academy of the overrated." However, in real life, he accepts the lionizing without a shred of self-criticism.

Manhattan's characters have plenty of money and boundless freedom, two accessories which other people in other places fight for. Their emotional practice is psychoanalysis, the result of which is that the only person who seems mature is a 17-year-old—too young for *this* use of the couch. They never attempt to puncture the all-surrounding idiocy, they discuss it; it turns them into clowns who elaborate on pratfalls. Behavioral trash is far from sinfulness, thus words like humanness, judgment and forgiveness are out of sync with this movie. But after all, Beatrice was the same age, while Juliet was 14, and both Dante and Romeo expected something more than maturity from them. The critics, almost all of whom praised it to the skies, see in *Manhattan* existential choices. But the movie is about discomforts. Its heroes and heroines need neither insight nor empathy, only

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antihistamine.

Allen wishes to visualize the poetry of city lore, but those who remember Renoir, Rene Clair, Capra or DeSica, quickly realize the charmlessness of his efforts. He has no knack for telling a story visually; he needs words, a deluge of words—in fact, in all of *Manhattan,* there's only one sequence that relies on wordlessness.

The New York libcultural lobby touts him as a major *cinéaste;* actually he does not know how to make movies. He knows how to make skits. He's an intelligent and witty writer of reflective satirical short stories; this is why his only good movie was *Love and Death,* where the subject was literature and literary imagery, not people and human vicissitudes. Movies—no way. Some say that *Manhattan* and *Annie Hall* are intelligent movies. Perhaps, in the same sense that *Time* is an intelligent magazine. This kind of intelligence is the last refuge of mediocrity. With proper advertising, it can always be promoted to genius.

* * *

These two movies, so far apart in ambition and style, are nonetheless a similar celebration of jargon as the key to culture and interpersonal understanding. If *Manhattan* glorifies the socio-psychoanalytical man/woman, *Same Time, Next Year* sentimentalizes man/woman as a reproductive cliché of media trendiness.

The latter is a particularly shallow treatment of the simple attributes of existence: continuity of a love affair, plain bonds of sexual attraction sustained by infrequency of encounters. Its two protagonists change their attitudes, their outlooks on life, morality, emotions and mutual attachments in time with the fashionable poses and psychological accouterments dictated by politics (not history), journalism (not knowledge or education), modish predilections (not inner transformations), and linguistic fads (not understanding of the changeable). Originally a play, which might have had a modicum of inoffensive artlessness on the stage, on screen *Same Time, Next Year* only exposes the power of the platitude as a modern coordinator of our inferiorities—which are not always of our own making and which we owe to the giant manipulative forces of mass culture.

* * *

***Newsfront . . . When the World Was Young;* Directed by Phillip Noyce; a New Yorker Films Release.**

This is an Australian import, rarely seen here, and it doesn't invite one to look for more. It breathes a kind of primitive procommunism which, in this country, is considered embarrassing even in the living rooms of Central Park West; among West Virginia coal miners, it would be considered cheap comedy.

Australia in the '50s is called a police state, only fellow-travelers express coherent views, the Russian massacre in Hungary is viewed with full understanding, while those who condemn it are imperialists. When the movie tells simple stories about people (weddings, work, funerals, house-building, children, unrequited love, lethal accidents), it becomes engaging. Whenever it returns to procommunist rhetoric it portrays those who use it as upright and intelligent, and those who object as Neanderthals with brows so low that brains are eliminated, along with any sensible argument for their persuasion. Which proves that the Australians of the Marxist persuasion still have a long way to go before they grasp that sado-masochism is more effective against democracy than fellow-traveler pro-Stalinism. The movie chronicles the newsreel business in Australia and its fading under pressure from TV. The unrelenting leftish exegesis of everything that goes wrong makes us only smile sadly when the lights go up in the theatre. □

Correspondence

Letter From Paris: An Exhibition and a Movie from the Other Europe

by Leo F. Raditsa

There is now an extraordinary exhibition in Paris (which will be on view until the first days of November), "Paris-Moscow 1900-1930." The show is huge, with over 2,500 objects. In an astonishing series of pictures it not only recreates an epoch (roughly between 1905 to 1923) but it also makes it clear that Moscow understood better then what was happening in Paris than did Paris itself.

This show somehow reveals the courage and strength of the times before the First World War. Courage is in the canvases of Kazimir Malevitch, the same Malevitch who said in April, 1915: "Art needs truth, not sincerity." But it lives, too, in the works of painters you might have imagined had grown too familiar to surprise you, in Picasso, in an extraordinary portrait of his wife Olga (1917) that is like nothing of his I have ever seen—a portrait in the tradition of Goya and, through Goya, of American portraits of the 18th century; in a Matisse picture (1913) of a Moroccan woman which was apparently meant to instruct the painters of Russian society at that time how to look at a face without emptying it of insides; in Chagall, especially in his cubist self-portrait (1912-13), good enough to re-

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mind you of Rembrandt, earnest and dreamlike; in Derain; in a Vlaminck landscape (1909) with cypress trees which move like flames into the sky. Among the propaganda posters (there is one of Lenin standing on a globe sweeping away monarchs, judges and businessmen) rises Naum Gabo's wonderous *Column* (1917), strong but transparent (you can see through it, unlike ancient columns), fearless but soft, true to the simple strength of ancient art, as if oblivious to all our struggles with perception since Masaccio.

This show tells too of the courage of collectors, especially of two Russian collectors before the First World War, Ivan Morozov and Serge Shichukin. It is the eagerness and the courage of their eyes that selected works that often had been just painted, that makes you wonder whether you have ever looked at the masters you thought you knew. Faced with work too fresh to suffer the beguilement of aesthetic theories, they chose pictures in which life and nature was palpable.

The exhibition begins with a space that looks like a great house on moving day in Moscow in the decades before the Bolsheviks seized power. In the center stands a great Bonnard triptych (1911), called *Mediteranée,* commissioned by Morozov. In the spaces about the Bonnard there is furniture and frilly, formal long dresses, faded, brittle-looking as if they had just been brought to light after seventy-five years in a trunk. All about there are contemporary portraits of important individuals, skillful but wooden and without conviction, suggesting a world without fight in it. Bonnard's picture, which has something of the glow of the sky itself, makes you feel you are looking through a window that opens on the faraway Mediterranean, but also on the past. These pictures have not been seen for over forty years, either in the West or in the Soviet Union (the Russian collectors before 1917, in contrast, opened their houses to the public once a week). The overwhelming impression is of breaking into a past which although in its Russian, that is in its European dimension, is completely unknown to us, is much closer than we think.

This show is really about the unremembered Russian painters before the First World War who knew how to cope with Paris. Theirs is unabashed work, work that does not attempt to hide its awkwardness, its false starts, its errors, its awe. Sometimes dull in its reverence, for instance, for Cézanne (Ilia Machkov), it never reminds you of forgeries. These painters knew something about learning without being students: they knew how to teach themselves; they had their own eyes. Among many dull Russian cubists, there are some (especially Ivan Klioun) who could subordinate the methodical, intellectual dissection in cubism to seeing Paris in a way that, perhaps, only Juan Gris could.

But then all this stops, the energy and the courage disappears. You have a sense that there had been more life than anybody could stand. Disingenuously, the exhibition (which is sponsored by the Soviet Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the French government) suggests a parallel between the brutal appearance of Soviet "socialist realism" and the move away from cubism in France, for instance, Picasso's statuesque nudes. The "socialist realist" canvases are as ugly as you would expect, but more cunning. Painters who in 1918 painted solid cubist paintings, painted "The Death of the Commissar" in 1928. There is an unwilling hardness, an unacknowledged bitterness in their work which repels you and makes you hold a cautious distance. There are desperate reminiscences of earlier times when eyes saw, for instance, Derain's *Samedi* (about 1913), but they are too resigned to be sorrowful. To paint a bunch of flowers becomes an act of defiance you barely dare to look at.

There are breathtaking exceptions: a man named Pavel Filonov who, in 1928, painted strong canvases without a hint of propaganda. And again Malevitch, most of whose work lies imprisoned in Soviet storage. (The catalogue does not mention his arrest in 1929 for "spying" for Germany where he had an exhibition in 1925.)

The Soviet regime has said it will show the exhibition (unchanged?) in Russia in 1981—which is hard to believe. The work of the Russian painters in exile after 1917 is shown elsewhere in Paris, because the French government yielded to a Soviet demand not to include it in the exhibition. The French government did not allow an important public discussion of this troubling, somewhat evasive show to take place at its site, "Beaubourg." Siniavsky is reported to have wept as he went through it.

* * *

A recent Polish film of Andrzej Wajda, *Les demoiselles de Wilko,* which is drawing crowds in Paris, helps to cope with the "Paris-Moscow" exhibition. In their thirst to experience something of life in Poland, French audiences appear to know what their leaders fear to acknowledge, that it is not good to talk of Europe without mentioning the other Europe, especially Poland, for which England and France allegedly went to war. Boring but uncomfortable, Wajda's movie implies more than it states—with the ambiguity not of art but of prudence.

A man in his late thirties, on leave from his job as a supervisor, returns in 1954 to the country of his youth, which he had left for the last time in 1939 for the war. He returns to an aunt and uncle, but above all to a family of sisters who had all been drawn to him. His return is as if from the dead; he barely recognizes them. He does not know that one of the sisters he loved died soon after he left her in 1939. He does not feel convincing surprise, not to speak of grief at the news. The scenes are unsettling because of the absence of emotions and because of the director's unwillingness to cope with its absence. The man exists as if he had no past. His references to the past are furtive. His manner is bored, resigned. Embarassment becomes

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the most vivid sign of life in the whole film. An emptiness invades everyone except the youngest sister, who had been a baby in 1939, and the man's aunt and uncle who have the sturdiness, goodwill and skeptical good sense that can come from having lived longer than a regime.

The film treats time as if it had stood still, but also denies it. The country house of the sisters is full of servants; people ride horseback or in buggies; the few cars date from the thirties. There is plenty of food but the people do not eat. They devour. The children of one of the sisters are dressed in starched clothes like Victorians and study piano, but their father is in the Party. Everything reminds you of Europe before the First World War, except there is nothing like confidence, only inertness. You wonder if you are in any place on earth. You do not know how to enter the film or how to stay out of it (except by leaving the theatre).

The blatant sexuality in the movie tells the most about this ambiguity of time, for nobody in such surroundings before the War of 1939 would have acted with such desperate shamelessness although some might have fantasized about it. The women act as if making love were nothing more than a physical act. (As I watched, I understood what André Amalrik meant about totalitarianism in mini-skirts and dungarees.) This feelinglessness implies brutality, a brutality everywhere implicit in this movie in which nothing happens.

More than the women, the main character, the man, makes you understand the unexperienced desperation in pretending nothing has happened, because you cannot understand what has occurred. His sensuality mirrors the sensuality of the women. Indifferent, conceited, he lets you understand that he has had them all—or could have if he had wanted. His boredom transfixes him. Neither innocence nor knowledge grows when time stands still. These creatures move like domestic animals in their well-appointed houses. They look like they are lost in office corridors when they walk out into their gardens and, worse still, into their meadows. In this powerlessness there is unacknowledged terror which nags at these characters like the last hint of life.

Wajda's own ambiguity is palpable when he photographs the countryside. He pretends to look with nineteenth century eyes, not the eyes of an impressionist, but the eyes of somebody who made the impressionists necessary, like Millet. There are shots of the countryside with the sun barely distinguishable in the mist, even of the dawn rising through the glowing haze—the kind of sight only a Turner should dare. The more Wajda "shot" nature in his unabashed manner the more something told me it was not shots of nature he took but interiors. He unwittingly confesses that there is no way to go outside no matter how much he looks.

The Poland of this movie is the Poland of twenty-five years ago looking at the Poland of fifteen years before that, not contemporary Poland with its nervous trendiness which Wajda addressed directly in another recent film, *The Man of Marble.* By showing that living eyes (including his) cannot see this contemporary Poland, Wajda means we have been left out, we have left ourselves out of our own history, all of us, even those of us who happen to live in the West, for we too do not make good sense of ready realities nor remember much, although there is nothing stopping us—except ourselves.

* * *

The "Paris-Moscow" exhibition shows time brought to a halt when it shows a generation of painters, and more, strangled. This exhibition also tells something of what that destruction did to us.

Wajda means this emptiness (which I have been calling time standing still and which we usually call "totalitarianism" as if it were *something*) is an absence of almost everything, of life, of

Liberal Culture

On Human Failings

A remarkable feat in hagiography has been achieved in the *New York Times Magazine* which ran a sentimental life story of Sen. Edward Kennedy by a certain Anne Fleming, next to which *Pollyanna* seems to have been written by a streetwise naturalist of the Norman Mailer school. As everybody should know, Edward Kennedy was once expelled from Harvard for cheating on an exam. There's no way Ms. Fleming can see this trivial but indicative incident other than as a tragedy that reflects Sen. Kennedy's greatness of mind, heart and honor. She writes:

> "So, trying not to fail his father in one way, he failed him in another . . ."

Which is meant to say that even if he had tortured squirrels he would have had no other choice but to do it for the sake of his father. Harvard University, of course, knowing that there are limitations to even a great school's respectability, readmitted young Kennedy some time later.

The liberal press' ingenious method of dealing with presidents is to see them through a set of meticulously prescribed lenses. With Sen. Kennedy's appearance on the scene as a potential candidate, the *New York Times* gives us a directive for how this statesman should be perceived. He must be reported to us only by worshipers; critics' opinions of him matter as much as Sakharov's opinions matter to *Pravda.* He thus will emerge as a statue, a synthetic Parsifal, Little Lord Fauntleroy, Jefferson and Alexander the Great. Chappaquiddick will no longer make him look suspicious—only tragic. After all—everything for father . . . □

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even existence, of memory, of the knowledge of creation, of everything except the little that it takes to survive without knowing it. Because of the insatiable niggardliness of this emptiness in which the absence of the knowledge of creation—the creation that was destroyed in Moscow after 1917—renders the individuals in Wajda's film apparently unable to say meaningful words. No longer able to remember themselves, the individuals on the screen appear like ghosts who haunt themselves because they do not know how to haunt the world, and us. They have been made to become their own victims. The same ghosts haunt the "Paris-Moscow" exhibition, which in the tattered, evasive worldliness of "détente," ignores them as if they were uninvited guests. □

The American Proscenium

Mr. Carter's Twilight

Mr. Carter's presidency is entering its last year. It's on the record that we have never supported him. We have thought from the beginning that he conned America. Here is our primary proof:

—He campaigned on an anti-Washington motto, then stuffed his administration with political hacks and multiplied the bureaucracy;

—He ran as a middle-of-the-roader, and hired the largest imaginable number of radical liberals and leftists of the McGovern stripe;

—He promised to be responsible to the people, but now blames the people for inflation, though he knows that only the government can create inflation;

—He presented himself as a man of traditional principle, and no other administration in history has a higher record of permissive tolerance for drugs, antifamily organizations and smut publications;

—He declared himself to be a champion of human rights around the world, but his pathetic crusade ended with his chiding Zimbabwe while cowering before the Soviet Union;

—He proclaimed himself to be a believer in American values as they are imbedded in and perpetuated by American culture, but it turned out that by culture, he meant rock lyrics.

Thus, if the land of the free tends to perceive in Mr. Carter a nice, intelligent, decent, even innocent incompetent, we do not quarrel with the last. But we deny his intelligence, decency and innocence. Since we saw the first flash of his smile on TV, we have had a clear impression of deceptiveness, deviousness, and deftly concealed mediocrity of mind. Smartness, expediency and ignorance often go too well together, and nothing he has done during his tenure has convinced us that there's more to the man. We may not be as sharp and observant as the great psychologists of the establishment press, but our intuition told us that that one who so shrilly identified himself with the silently dissatisfied and patiently modest would be the first to abandon them, both at home and abroad. We had an immediate inkling that one who ranted so ostentatiously against lying and so loudly insisted on his reliability would not be above lying and defaulting on his promises. We were a bit amused with his assurances of his familiarity with arts and letters: we know that someone who speaks too much about his own brain power is bound to deliver dumb and banal opinions, prefabricated judgments and low-brow formulations. But we were less amused when we saw the press' widespread endorsements of his "intellectuality." This sounded foreboding, as peddling acumen and trustworthiness always spells trouble. We are quite sorry that our early and immediate apprehensions were so awfully correct.

Treason à la Hollywood

Actor Henry Fonda, defending his daughter from the outcry of Californians who do not want to have her as a state official appointed by Mr. Brown, the temporary Governor, is reported to have said:

> "I believe history has already shown that the antiwar groups were right . . . Jane has been vindicated not only by history, but by the CIA and the FBI as well."

Actor Fonda is too quick a reader of history. Whether the Vietnam opponents and war-resisters in this country were right or wrong is still to be seen. As of now, we know that they helped to establish a tropical Gulag in Indochina. But Ms. Fonda is yet another story: she's not only a war-resister, but is also guilty of behavior which can reasonably be described as treason. If she doesn't feel the blood of dead soldiers and tortured POWs on her conscience, it's a matter of both her ideological bigotry and moral callousness. Why these qualities of mind and soul should merit a seat on the California Arts Council is an enigma to every unprejudiced Californian and American. It's doubtful that actor Fonda, with all his professional skills, could explain it.

Young's Exit

One of the most bizarre visionaries in the history of the American diplomacy, Mr. Andrew Young, has bidden farewell to that field of human exertions. Mr. Young had a vision of locating

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the destiny of the USA in Africa, and as our UN ambassador he tried to convince us, and everybody else, that the top priority of American global policy should be to be loved in Nigeria. Sensibly speaking, there's plenty to it: we need Africa's natural resources and we certainly wish the politically budding nations would choose our values and principles when structuring their new societies. However, those nations need us as much, if not more, than we need them, and we cannot escape an intuition that—in spite of our ancient opposition to colonialism, and the grants we bestow upon their students at our universities—they do not wish us as well as we do them. Moreover, American foreign policy is a very complicated matter, its pragmatism and idealism can turn into a concoction that has made many before Mr. Young quite heady and unable to walk straight. Mr. Young, certainly one of the ablest and most willful contemporary black leaders, had, of course, more in mind than just foreign policy. He wanted to be the chief architect of a feedback strategy: American blacks would help the African states to grow in affluence and prestige; those states, in turn, would reinforce the prestige and power of the black community in America—the leaders of the latter would prove to be the most effective partners to deal with the leaders of the former.

It was a neat concept, and it's a cruel irony that Mr. Young's demotion came about because of challenging a similar device—namely the complex relationship between American Jewry and the State of Israel. He still seems not to understand certain subtleties of politics which are as deeply grounded in speculative philosophy as in the raw realities of utilitarian necessities. After all, the Israeli Air Force has already been locked in deadly combat with Russian and Cuban pilots, whose next target may even be the Southern Christian Leadership Conference headquarters in Georgia, while we have never heard of a Nigerian or Tanzanian soldier in the same situation. Besides, the only Africans who want to do what the Israelis did are the Angolan anti-Communist guerrillas, or Bishop Muzorewa's troops, both of whom Reverend Young deems the devil's spawn and to whom any U.S. support in arms and politics he rabidly opposes. Which makes many wonder whether he was ever qualified for his job in the first place.

What followed was most unsettling. The black community reacted to Young's dismissal as if blacks had a foreign policy separate from that of the United States and as if the helmsman and symbol of this policy had been executed. It only confirms our suspicion about Young's designs. We see this reaction as a grave mistake on the part of American blacks. It brings them back to an immature political ambience which suggests that one man should be the focus of all hope. It is a mood unworthy of a group of people which has already demonstrated how much talent and ability it harbors. (LT)

War

In the aftermath of the Andrew Young affair, an unlikely confrontation seems to be flaring: a black-Jewish war of words and emotions. It should not be taken lightly. If it evolves into a full-scale conflict, some American fundamentals may be put to test.

The blacks have long been on a collision course with the Jews, allegedly for socioeconomic reasons. It began with the Black Panther Party's demagoguery about Jewish slumlords blood-sucking in the ghetto—a familiar argument. Consequently, the riots of the '60s hit Jewish shopkeepers quite forcefully. Then came the Jewish argumentation against educational quotas and affirmative action as emancipation tools, and the black social militancy of the '70s responded with open hostility.

During the Young showdown, the belligerency turned into unmitigated aggression. Julian Bond bluntly announced that if Jews and blacks disagree "each should use whatever power it has to pursue its goals." By "power" he seemed to have in mind what Rev. Jesse Jackson even more bluntly denoted as the $141 billion owned by the Arab OPEC nations, "half of that in U.S. dollars." What was left unsaid was that if blacks render the proper services to the Arabs, they may have access to this money and could use it for their own domestic policy purposes. Now, such a design sounds frightfully ominous: history has taught us that even the mightiest empires can disintegrate when foreign money begins to manipulate internal policies to the advantage of one segment of a society. The priority becomes not the common good but the naked might of a group who has the means to present itself as fighting for the common good while actually promoting the interests of a foreign element.

Earlier, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made some unfortunate gestures in the realm of foreign policy issues of his time, and their offhandedness hurt his cause more than helped it. Both Andrew Young's and his zealous defenders' ideas in the same area seem, at best, callow. It's not beside the point to remind them that the Arabs excelled in slave trading for nearly a millennium and that Africa was their best business territory.

Since the victories of the '60s, when their moral credit with white America soared, the blacks now seem to be confusing liberation—spiritual, political, social, economic—with an ethics of getting even. They are not the same. It is most unfortunate for all supporters of civil rights that the righteous and justified black grievances seem, of late, to have been transmuted into a sort of moral terrorism. Some of their most influential leaders seem to have reached the conclusion that, after centuries of being pushed, the great era of their doing the pushing has arrived. A climate seems to have pervaded the country in which whatever the blacks say and do—in Congress or in petty supermarket incidents—cannot be objected

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to or resisted. According to this new ethic, whatever Mr. Young did and Messrs. Bond and Jackson may say in support, it would be morally wrong, or at least unbecoming, to hold them responsible for it. It's an unsalubrious climate in which no positives will grow.

Some Current Fallacies About Foreign Affairs: The Lessons of Vietnam

Since the last years of the Indochina war, and the moral and intellectual collapse triggered, if not caused, by that war, public discussion of foreign policy has been conducted in a more than usually confused and emotional atmosphere. The result is that discussion of international affairs, particularly in the mass media, has centered around a number of unexamined assumptions and even catch phrases, which rarely receive criticism. A full dissection of these fallacies might require a book, but a brief look at some of them may be worthwhile.

Perhaps the favorite theme of popular discussion, explicitly or implicitly, is "No More Vietnams." Reference is often made to the "lessons of Vietnam"—a phrase which is regularly trotted out to justify inaction or appeasement. Like "détente" it is a rubber-band term. The "lessons" sound concrete but are actually quite vague, for they are never spelled out. That is not surprising, for the people who use this phrase often have no clear idea of what happened in Vietnam. Nor is it clear whose lessons are meant, for different groups found different things wrong with our involvement there. Some, like Hans Morgenthau, held that communist victory everywhere on the Asian mainland was inevitable, and we must accept it; others —we might call them the antidomino school—argue that what happened in any particular country would not affect the others, so our intervention was unnecessary. Some opposed defending an undemocratic regime as incompatible with our ideals, others claimed that we were forcing our ideas on a people who didn't want them. The Carter administration's foreign policies are largely administered by men who supported the war and then lost their nerve. This administration seems particularly entranced by the "lessons of Vietnam"—so it's not surprising that its foreign policy has been pretty confused.

There is, however, a common underlying assumption about the war tying the disparate views together. That is that our intervention was not only mistaken, but that its failure was inevitable. After all, if the "Best and Brightest" couldn't succeed, who could? Not a few liberals, like David Halberstam, reacted to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations' failures by losing faith in reason and intelligence. But in reality it is hard to find a war more ineptly conducted; from today's perspective, we begin to see that our leaders acted similarly to the "donkeys" (according to the then-current London street parlance) who ran British affairs in World War I. Whether or not our intervention was right or necessary, there were many measures that could have been taken from 1965 onward that would have brought victory, or rather would have prevented a North Vietnamese victory.

Some hidden assumptions tag along with this obsession with Vietnam. One is that that war was the worst thing to happen, or that has ever happened, at least to the USA. Another is that it is a pattern of events that somehow is likely to repeat itself, or perhaps has already been repeated. It may be recalled that a year or two ago Congress and the mass media boasted of having prevented "another Vietnam" in Angola. That is, they meant that they prevented it for the United States; they didn't quite manage that feat for the Angolans.

Now anyone who thinks that the Vietnam war was a particularly horrible disaster, has a rather poor acquaintance with the history of the world since 1914, or even with the possibilities of the present. Next to a nuclear holocaust Vietnam would be invisible. Had most people in say, 1960 (when fear of nuclear war was more intense than it is today), been told that the worst thing that would happen in the next fifteen years would be a communist conquest of Indochina with the deaths of 50,000 Americans, they might have been rather relieved. The foregoing may strike many people as callous, but I only wish to make the point that many things worse than Vietnam are possible. Slowly, a recognition makes itself prevalent that a policy obsessed with avoiding another Vietnam will lead us—is probably already leading us—into much greater perils. Nor is Vietnam likely to be repeated, for that situation was almost unique in the postwar era. Nowhere else was a Communist Party so well-placed to compete with rival nationalist groups, while in other divided nations communist rule has had to be imposed by nothing short of naked Soviet power.

The situation in Angola, where we supposedly deftly avoided another Vietnam, was in most respects the complete opposite of that in Vietnam. The anti-communists were clearly the stronger group in Angola. The Angolan communists were boosted to power by outside military intervention; the anticommunists were forced to wage a guerrilla war against regulars who were entirely dependent on sea routes very vulnerable to American action. Actually, those elements who have preened themselves on our failure to help our friends sometimes admit this. They explain that the *Soviets* will learn that fooling around in other people's internal affairs "doesn't pay," they'll "learn their lesson" that one can't impose one's views on other countries. Of course, they do not explain why the Soviets have so conspicuously failed to learn this in Eastern Europe. But these people often peddle a rather distorted idea of pre-Vietnam American policy, grumbling that America must no longer be the "policeman of the world." It would be news in Eastern Europe, and many other places, that it ever was. (AJL). □

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Journalism

The Villager Anno 1979

Village Voice, a Manhattan publication, is an advertising organ for mattresses and stereos. In fact, in its pages, these two devices stand for much more: together they form an ideological symbol—just like the fasces of ancient Rome, the eagle and arrows of America and the hammer and sickle of Communism. Using a mattress to the sound of a stereo is to the editors and readership of the *Village Voice* the highest expression of humanness, the essence of their ethos, the sacred mission for which mortals dwell on this planet. And, of course, the *Voice* is body and soul for any radicalism, revolution, deviation and nihilism. Not long ago, one of its "philosophical" beacons, ranting against the demise of the 1960s *(Village Voice's* zenith), wailed that meager were "the prospects for radical change in a society where most people had enough to eat."

Naturally, *Village Voice* would prefer that people starve in order to be able to have a *carmagnole* of unisex humanoids dancing in Sheridan Square and to be able to decree compulsory feeding of school children with cocaine granola. In the meantime, it must find consolation in what is closest to its sense of moral elegance. In a recent issue, the *Voice* triumphantly announced a new cultural superevent, a breakthrough in American letters, a monumental achievement of Western publishing—a book entitled *Private Moments in Public Places,* which consists of photographs surreptitiously taken in New York City communal bathrooms at the New York Public Library, the Port Authority, Roseland Dance Hall, Bloomingdale's, etc. The enraptured *Village Voice* calls the authors "conceptual artists" and concludes in bliss: "What ultimately emerges from the pictorial essay is a gentle, almost sociological overview . . ." We have another sequitur: if the privacy of even such a moment cannot be protected by the Constitution, what will happen if the radicals of the *Village Voice* stripe ever succeed in their revolution and finally came to power? □

The Distinguished Dunce of the American Press Award

This month Ms. Mary McGrory, syndicated *Washington Star* columnist, won hands down. In her column entitled "Andrew Young Will Be Missed," we read with wonderment:

> "Young, the . . . diplomat, tagged for doing what is expected of diplomats, lying . . ."

We sympathize with Ms. McGrory's anguish. She's an innocent victim of life's cruel complexities: no one ever told her that diplomats are not supposed to lie to everybody, that they are supposed to know to whom to lie and to whom to tell the truth. We hope she'll accept our award as consolation. □

Leninism on North Michigan Avenue

> "That's not to say the movies were never used for a political purpose. During the Depression, ridiculously escapist 'talkies' served as a novel and effective opiate to keep the great unwashed from rioting in the streets. A decade later, during World War II, patriots such as John Wayne and Carole Lombard contributed immeasurably to the propaganda effort by churning out a steady supply of battlefront pictures and by organizing giant war bond rallies.
>
> What was rarely seen was a film which smacked of dissent or pointed to a shortcoming in this society. What was almost never heard was an actor who dared speak out on the 'wrong' side of a public issue, knowing that to do so could bring instant professional death."

Where do these inspired, angry, well-informed lines come from? *Pravda? Literaturnya Gazieta?* No, from the *Chicago Tribune.* Is it an interview with a Soviet film critic? No, it's a piece by a certain Mr. Michael Coakley, the *Tribune's* California correspondent and political reporter. Did he transcribe his copy from a Soviet textbook on movies? This we do not know, but we know that he's lying—whether out of ignorance or deliberately. The movies of Paul Muni, John Ford, Frank Capra, John Garfield—to mention only the best known—belie his socrealistic agitprop fervor.

Of course, he has an explanation for why Hollywood was the cradle of American fascism:

> "There are plenty of Hollywood figures still around who recall vividly the dark days of McCarthyism when dozens of actors, directors, and screenwriters found their careers cut short by the wild accusations of professional anticommunists . . . a sinister force which not only stifled creativity but also made American films and those who produced them political and intellectual eunuchs." □

Literature in America

A "literary critic" for the *Chicago Tribune Book World,* reviewing some masterpiece by a certain William Goldman, ecstatically exclaims:

> ". . . he wrote the best book of criticism I've ever read!"

This confession makes him uniquely qualified to exercise the onerous duties of a *Chicago Tribune* literary critic. He might have heard names like Coleridge, or Sainte-Beuve in a trivia contest. □

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Polemics & Exchanges

Love of Vivaldi

by Tom Bethell

I don't know how your Mr. Craig Wyatt got the idea that my book on George Lewis "haughtily dismisses Vivaldi." I wrote (in the only reference to Vivaldi in the book) that "He [Bunk Johnson] may have thought he was only playing a melody with a beat, but the true characteristic of his music was a low-keyed continuum of polyphony which has approximately as much commercial appeal as a violin concerto by Vivaldi—and many of the same characteristics."

To say that a composer does not have much commercial appeal is not to "haughtily dismiss" him. For the record, I love Vivaldi.

I think that Mr. Wyatt may be correct in what he says about my comment on Aaron Copland, however. I said that Copland had made "derogatory remarks about jazz." In fact, as Wyatt says, Copland has "been influenced by jazz forms." I should have said that it was *traditional* jazz that Copland didn't like. He had no time for well-organized New Orleans counterpoint. But if it was modern, experimental, cerebral, steel-wire-through-your-eardrums stuff, then of course the intellectual Mr. Copland loved it. □

Mr. Bethell is the Washington, D.C. correspondent for Harper's *magazine.*

Editor's Comment *continued from page 5*

imbued with this same persuasion produced what was perhaps the largest abuse of peacetime normalcy in history.

It may be difficult to understand, much less to accept, but our strength and our weakness, our vitality and our debilitation are geared to the proper functioning of our sense of normalcy. The vigorousness of our belief in the normative categories of our feelings and our conduct precede any consideration of whether or not our institutions and our social organism are still viable. We must feel bound by those normative forces accumulated in ourselves, in our traditions and our customs. The New American Person created by the Liberal Culture does not feel obligated by such forces: he/she may still believe that law and morality play some little-specified role in a society, but they accept normlessness and abnormalcy in the name of "higher" necessities or moralities. We who think of ourselves as nonliberals do not.

Normalcy is a cornerstone of our worldview. On occasion, our faith in normalcy makes us underdogs. More often it constitutes our bridge to people who do not comprehend too well our nomenclatures and harangues about philosophy, morality and their relation to social health, which is so much better exemplified by remedies for inflation and the energy crisis. But when we read some polls, we know how close we are to the mainstream of the American mass thinking that articulates itself by rejecting abnormalcy. *Playboy* magazine, which fancies itself as having created a new subculture of fast food hedonism designed to anesthetize the midlife blues, polled its readers not long ago, with the Harris Company's help, and found that notions like noncarnal love, fidelity and marriage still hold an inexplicable spell over the great majority of them. To the smart intellectualoids in *Playboy's* headquarters those findings were both enigmatic and loathsome: their cultural limitations bar them from knowing that their "philosophy" has been privy to mankind since the first realization that humans mate regardless of seasons, that the consequence of coupling is not always procreation, and that random sex reduces the worth of life so much that it makes it vegetatively meaningless and boring. We thus invented the sexual principles of love, custom, convention, chastity, modesty, normalcy.

Superb civilizations and cultures were structured on these exclusively human devices; life became meaningful, rich, full of purely human happiness and sadness, without whose interplay we would be little different from gnats. Now, *Playboy* ideologists have come up with a proposition of the one-night-stand sexual ethos, once quite popular with cave men and practiced by drifting misfits throughout the history of mores, and marvel that their customers may pay for gawking but are reluctant to make such supermarket wisdom a guiding theory of life.

So, while we are noting public opinion surveys, it would make sense to report that one, recently undertaken on behalf of the Illinois General Assembly, found that 71% of the people interviewed were in favor of dropping insanity as a legal defense for a crime. If this is not a dramatic, poignant outcry for restoration of the notion of normalcy as an obligatory coefficient of social reality—then I don't know what is. I only hope that more and more people will start thinking how to wisely institutionalize these overbearing sentiments of so many of us.

—Leopold Tyrmand

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